OTHER WORLDS
SCIENCE STORIES

SEPTEMBER, 1955

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EXCITING NOVELET
By
M. J. Nuttall

EIGHTH DAY

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Stanley I. Rowson

POLITICIAN

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SEPTEMBER 1955

Issue No. 13 (34)

OTHER WORLDS

Science Stories

SARAH & BRUCE

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RAY PALMER

BEA MAHAFFEY

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SCIENCE fiction, as a distinct and separate form of literature, is thirty years old. Your editor began his career as a science fiction fan forty years ago. He began writing for it (as a selling author) twenty-five years ago. He was editor of the largest selling (and the oldest) science fiction magazine for nearly twelve years. He has been a publisher of science fiction magazines for six years. All this gives him a right to say a few words about science fiction, with a fairly good chance of knowing what he is talkng about.

Why such an introductory paragraph to this month's editorial? Well, it's this way—we've been playing cat-and-mouse, waiting for the big opportunity we knew was coming to prove that our long experience *is* worthwhile, and can be used effectively for the continued progress and betterment of a dream. Yes, science fiction is a dream. It is all the aspirations of mankind rolled into an expressive medium. It is the *words* of the *imaginings* that make up civilized progress, mental development, and social advancement. Thus, when we became a science fiction "fan", it wasn't just a fad with us, it was a sincere belief in the future of mankind, and a sincere effort to see what that future might be, and an equally sincere effort to influence that future for the best. Thus, when we say we've been playing cat-and-mouse, it is in the sense that we've been waiting for an opportunity to do still more for science fiction to keep it on the path on which it was originally launched, to keep significant the *meaning* of science fiction, the reason it was born. That opportunity has come.

Just what is this opportunity, you might ask? You who are fans, know that science fiction has gone

through some mighty rough times, and that just recently there have been the roughest of all. Once more we can count on our fingers and toes (and have some left over) the number of magazines dedicated to science fiction. And we can even count on our fingers (and never mind the toes) the number of magazines actually worth counting, and which can be reasonably depended upon to carry on in the immediate future. Thus, in the light of such a dismal picture, what opportunity is there? Well, it's really very simple: a dream, an ideal, is never a really profitable thing. Quite the contrary, it is often a hardship, a source of heartache, and many times the rough road to failure. It is something that is laughed at, scoffed at, persecuted ridiculed, and thrust down by custom. It is also something, when successful, which is like the ball carrier in a football game—piled on when touchdown bound! The number of free-loaders is fantastic, when an ideal begins to gallop. And all the free-loaders are riding with only one "ideal" in mind, to make money. As for being idealistic, and willing to sacrifice for such an ideal, they are entirely lacking. Our opportunity consists in the fact that the free-loader has finally fallen off, climbed off, jumped off, been thrown off, or just plain murdered. He has resigned in disgust. He has been given such a rough ride that he will never again climb aboard such an impractical vehicle. And, we say, it's about time, and good riddance!

The free-loader, while he dug his spurs into our flanks, just about ruined our ideal. It is spavined, winded, debauched, and consigned to the glue factory. In short, we idealists are stuck with it. However we are glad of it. We were stuck with it in the first place. We stuck ourselves with it. We dreamed night and day about it, and put our dreams down on paper. Today we can look around us and see the dreams walking. They all came true. They are realities. And we are proud of them—proud of the fact that we dreamed them correctly—but not too proud of the way they have been used.

But mankind has always been that way. He rides roughshod over virtue and dignity and gallantry. He is actually part of our dream, since the whole thing was formulated because we wanted to make something of mankind, something a little better than the brute he actually is. We haven't succeeded, to a very great extent, but we haven't given up. The fact is, we've reached a point where we can once more go to work on him, subtly and insidiously, preparing his fu-

ture path for him by soft words, leading him by remarks made as "asides" in the guise of fiction.

Naturally there is a problem here: what words to use? It is the big problem, the one that keeps the free-loader off the wagon until it gets rolling so that he can ride without being articulate, coast along on sheer dumbness. And not everybody has a fair-to-middling idea of what those words ought to be. Almost nobody has an idea, in fact. Even some of the minds at the helms of the magazines-you-can-once - more - count - on - your - fingers - and - toes.

We've heard quite a few of these editors and publishers express opinions many times, some of them quite recently, on what makes the right kind of words to make the right kind of science fiction. One of the more vociferous, our old friend Bill Hamling, recently laid it on the line in his magazine. He told us exactly what was wrong with science fiction, and with the writers, and even hinted what was wrong with the editors and publishers. Of course he was wrong; Bill always is. But we won't go into that. We only say it to stir him up—because Bill isn't half bad, and the only way to get him thinking is to disagree with him. It seems to sting him into action, and when the lad goes to work, he *can* produce. But he's prone to be too certain he's right after he's had a few years experience, bitter and otherwise, and then he plans his future after the past. That's what makes Bill wrong. He knows what's right, *after* it's happened. He doesn't know that once it's been established, it's out of date, and entirely useless.

One thing we have learned, and one thing only, is that learning is a *continuing* process, one that exists always in the now, as a pinpoint, or more correctly, like the pin itself, with the head end pointed toward the future, and the dwindling-pointed end directed toward the past. What we are trying to say here is that what we've learned is a thing of diminishing returns, that it dies as fast as it is born, and once dead is very, very dead. It is only the pregnancy of learning *to come* which is worth a hollering hoot—and all the hooting and hollering that Bill does about what he's learned puts him on the sharp end of the pin. We like to think of our own intellectual progress as the blunt end of the pin, going nowhere, and if it does move, halted by the size of the hole into which it is descending.

Thus, our opportunity presents itself. Here we are, at a dead end,

(*Continued on page* 104)

EIGHTH DAY

By M. J. Nuttall

The stars still glowed as brightly in the heavens, but man had learned his lesson—and that lesson was Death. Let it not be said that Man easily gave up his dream of conquering space —not until space proved itself deadly beyond the imagining. So, unwillingly, Man turned his back on space and gave himself to his second-greatest dream—the search for earthly perfection. But even here he met failure, until the wisdom of an ancient avatar was united with the dream of a questing youth.

THIS *was the day of the Jungle-Add!*

Tenteon's mind rang with the excitement of the thought. The calmness he had pre-hypnotized himself in displaying for the Mentor's benefit was wearing off, now, at this safe distance from Centre.

Sudden exhilaration swept him, activating brain-waves until he was inwardly shouting with glee.

His companion for the day's Enlargement, Fourforl, stiffened abruptly at this unexpected mental outburst, and gaped at him, open-mouthed.

"What's your ceph?" he teleod, horrified. "Why, one moment you're as enthusiastic as an oyster, and now! You'd better watch it, Te, or you'll be recalled. You're exceeding allowed emotion-peak!"

Fourforl frowned as he scolded Tenteon by telepathy, for the sensitive minds of this race needed no encephalograph to calculate brain-waves.

Tenteon hooted.

"They won't catch me this time," he confided mischievously. "We are out-range now, and these vibration-blankers they force us to wear through the Jungle work both ways, don't forget. If they keep the vibrations from Primal-Sector from reaching us with full impact, then, likewise, anything I choose to express can't be picked up full-charge by our Mentor. Besides, we are not being checked now. We both passed our Probable Reactive Exams with plenty of leeway."

Tenteon chortled again, remembering how he had accomplished that seemingly impossible feat.

Fourforl shook his head incomprehensively.

"I don't see how you did. You're over Reactive right this minute, and you know it. What are you pulling off?"

Tenteon toyed with the idea of telling his secret, and knew it would be the last time he'd be able to use the trick if he did.

Instead, he shrugged and answered, "You know the *ten*-pattern. It is an unpredictable—sometimes. I'm here, anyhow, so quit worrying."

Fourforl was unconvinced.

"And since when have even *tens* become unpredictable?" he inquired sarcastically. "I know you! You've been up to something again, and this smacks worse than usual." Fourforl dropped his bantering mood and continued, deadly serious. "You do worry me, Te. The Mentors know the safety limits, yet you continually defy them. You place yourself under stress by such defiance. Some fine day you'll develop a psycho-warp and be sent through Re-frame. Then alas, my friend Te will no longer

be a *ten,* but a lowly *eight* or *seven.* Are these risks you take worth that possible disaster?"

"To me they are," Tenteon answered with equal soberness. "I'd be quite the fool to take such chances otherwise, wouldn't I?" Suddenly bright anger hardened his thoughts, making them dagger-sharp. "Sure—the Mentors know the safety-limits—the limits that keep us wrapped in safe little cocoons! I often wonder about the ethics, of such protection. Take these blankers we are wearing, for example. It sounds so reasonably logical that we do so. I am aware of the conventional explanations—but—is this true wisdom, or is it a form of cowardice—this blocking us off from full perception of the Jungle's meaning and reality?"

"Are you off-balance?" gasped Fourforl. "You know the *meaning!* The Jungle is a living symbol of old-day conditions—overcrowding, misery, struggle, chaos! For though it is all recorded there by plant-proxy only, still it is realism of disorder, with all its horrible implications. Nowhere else on earth do you find even plants in such stages of disease, starvation and distress. That these conditions once extended to cover the human race with such absolute *horror* seems almost unthinkable, however true. And that we have created order from such misery and chaos is the Lesson. What more must you know? We have overcome all this now. There is peace everywhere, from man on down through the animal and plant kingdoms. And by achieving such order, our civilization is the only truly sane one which has ever existed upon this earth."

Tenteon interrupted impatiently. "I know . . . I know. All that has been drilled into us until we can prate it off like parrots. That is not what I meant."

"Nevertheless you question the Mentors' wisdom in furnishing us with blankers," Fourforl continued heatedly. "That means you haven't digested the latter part of this Lesson."

"Is it that I haven't— or that you have, too well?" The uncertainty Tenteon suddenly felt was in his thought pattern.

Fourforl sensed it, and pushed his point.

"You know the Jungle stresses the history of past insanity and disorder, and that it all stems from deprivations that result in psychic shock. If you went there unprepared, or I, we ourselves might experience some of that psychic shock at the very misery of that helpless area. An overexposure might mar our integrity by centering thought too strongly upon

that subject. The emotional impact of disorder in such concentrated form as we will encounter there will be bad enough even blanked, let alone full intensity. So what you imply is that psychic shock would be good for our race, when the truth is that we have only become sane by avoiding shock."

"No, Forl, no . . . you completely misunderstand. I did not mean that." Tenteon laughed a little apologetically. "I—I hardly comprehend the trend of such thoughts myself. But the case-histories of many of the men regarded as geniuses down through the centuries show, though . . ." Tenteon broke off in evident self-bewilderment.

"Yes, case histories of an insane world hailing as genius both the sanest and the most unsane," Fourforl finished off for him. "Is that true of us? Are our Elders insane? No! You dwell too much on history, and the outdated legends betray you."

"I wish I knew, though . . ." again Tenteon broke off, puzzled.

"Knew what?" Fourforl clearly showed his disdain.

Tenteon threw off the hopeless maze of his inner thoughts, and suddenly laughed.

"What I do know," he said lightly, "is that I shall do myself no harm by going on to the Jungle today. Believe me when I say that. You know me well enough to know that I am always excitable, perhaps over-curious, but not seriously so. The Jungle won't warp me. Just name me what disaster you could imagine in the trip that could truly warp me?"

Fourforl thought for a moment, then shrugged.

"If I could vision what excites you so, I'd know more where the danger lay," he pondered. "But I suppose you are right. I can't imagine anything that could possibly block your pattern. Besides, we have our blankers."

"Yes, we have our blankers," Tenteon agreed in mock reassurance, "so what are we slowing for?"

He surged ahead, laughing a little.

Fourforl followed. A tide of gloomy forebodings had somehow thrown its shadow over him and this day's adventure all at once seemed something to dread. Yet he was unable to analyze his mood, or to resist his comrade's daring. And, after all, it was not his risk, nor his destiny at stake. What they were going out to study seemed to him what a trip to a museum and zoo would have seemed to a mid-age student. He was no archaeologist to become fevered over dusty relics of lost cultures. Left unmoved by the emotions that shook

his comrade's *ten*-pattern so strangely, he felt uneasy, and sullen because his companion had caused that uneasiness.

Tenteon jolted him out of his dark study.

"Speed up. We're nearing the edge of the Jungle now," he urged eagerly.

The perceptions of both boys leaped ahead over the green park-like hills to a distant mass of tangled growth in the valley beyond. Both fell silent as they drifted towards the strange landscape of the primitive.

Had the long-dead inhabitants of old Terra been there to witness their approach, they, in turn, would have been presented with an astonishing sight. For the two youths floated free of the ground, sailing along bodily through a mastered anti-grav technique.

A close glimpse of the two would have presented other amazing facts. Their bodies were tall, lithe, a perfection of human form. There was a stream-lined effect to them, partially due to the fact that their heads were smoothly contoured, hairless, slightly larger than the earlier homo-sapiens' had been. But there resemblence ceased. The most of the effect came from the fact that the external features that had long ago designated handsomeness or homeliness had completely disappeared, and of facial features, only the mouth remained, and a firm chin.

Eyes, ears, and nose had vanished, leaving only smooth areas of sensitized skin in their wake.

As a part of their integral education, the boys had learned that man had once been adorned with these animalistic organs. It was hard to visualize, even, such primeval stages in development, though they had been shown by imagery, and this day would lead them to the physical proofs. Harder still to believe that, when that horribly magnificent last war was over, the remaining humans had bitterly complained of the loss of these external organs, though that loss had finally enabled them to perfect their inner perceptions and to enter into an era of lasting peace.

For, strangely, destiny had proven itself through suffering. Ears had been assailed by such annihilating vibrations from ultrasonic crystal weapons that the flesh forming these organs had refused such sounds entry, melting away to reform in protective inner barriers against such excruciatingly painful sound-frequencies. Eyes and noses had reintegrated against blinding lights and odors that could paralyze the nerve centers that sent out the radar of smell-fre-

quency.

In this painful way the refinement of specialized supersenses of atomic perception had come about, replacing those more rudimentary organs— in the survivors.

And by these atomic perceptions came the knowledge so necesary for the correction of the mutations and mutilations that had beset the remaining humans long after the outlawing of all forms of atomic warfare. By some miracle they had advanced by the very weapons intended to destroy more of them.

Yet, in the Utopian age thus brought into being, wonderous as it would seem to the old dissolute world left behind, still the ultimate secrets of personality and potential remain elusive.

No answer was found for the unsolvable mystery of personal pattern, fingerprint, individuality! Each ever pursued the rhythm of his own mind, followed his particular talents, and knew only himself as his guide.

General patterns were classified by number, however, and the whole of them set in a designated arrangement of perfect harmony. Like the thousand-petaled lotus of the ancient yogi, the study of life was unfolded on a graduating scale to all. Psychic shocks were avoided, frustrations unknown; *only the self-keyed powers of integral absorption in the associative brain centres caused the difference to be found in individuals*. This integrity resulted in varying reactions to the same set of circumstances. Otherwise, all was well with this world. Or was it?

For Tenteon and Fourforl this was another Enlargement. An Enlargement considered so impressive and important that it came far along on the list of Adds. Many and varied were the emotional excesses to be encountered in the plant-patterns here, emotions dark, alien, and completely unknown elsewhere on this peaceful world. For here, alone, plants struggled mercilessly for supremacy and a place in the sun. Here was the age-old cycle of yesterman's world; life cruelly overcrowded; green growth flourishing upon the decay of the vanquished. It was, at once, a lesson of intense pity for what had been, and a paeon of victory for what now was.

As the two boys moved into the first shadows of the Jungle, Tenteon found a corresponding rhythm moving through his mind, At first the words of it eluded him, only the sombre metrical beat throbbed there.

"In Prem's name, what are you chanting—the March of the Dead?" Fourforl asked testily,

picking up the rhythm.

"Just setting the stage properly," Henteon announced melodramatically. "How does it go now? 'Ghoul-haunted woodland of Wier!' That's it! Remember that poem, Forl? We studied it under the Mediums of Transmitted Melancholy."

"Which course I failed to appreciate in any aspect," retorted Fourforl shortly.

"But this particular poem by *ten*-Poe fits our surroundings to perfecton. Just listen, Forl, listen to these words, and see if they don't strike a corresponding note now." Tenteon's sense of drama emphasized the poem he recited:

For we knew not the month was October,
And we marked not the night of the year,
(Ah, right of all rights in the year!)
We noted not the dim lake of Auber (Though once we had journeyed down here),
Remembered not the dark tarn of Auber,
Nor the ghoul-haunted woodlands of Weir.'

"There, Forl, does that not strike some note of ancestral appreciation? What could be more appropriate here? Even now the Jungle echoes a refrain."

"It gives me gooseflesh, if that is what you intended," retorted Fourforl angrily. "Why you integrate such useless nonsense is beyond my comprehension."

They had moved deeper into the area and in the silence immediately following Fourforl's blast, suddenly the concentrate misery of the jungle patterns beat in upon their sensitive perceptions with nightmarish intensity.

Minds that had never known fear saw its shadow towering above them; bodies that had never felt hunger suffered the impact of the emotion of slow starvation; perception trained in orderliness now contacted a chaotic jumbling of masses. Only the blanketing off from full reception kept the shock of such a reality from being an overdose.

It was Fourforl who reached out to grip Tenteon's hand tightly. He shuddered a little.

"Brrrr, I shall be glad when this is passed," he mented tightly. "Now I know why even some of the Mentors argue it best that these areas be disintegrated and replaced with order. The misery of this vicious cycle is too horrible for expression."

Tenteon made no reply. His detachment indicated that he was withdrawn into areas remote from the reach of the *four*-neurals. His silence made Fourforl lonelier than

he had ever felt before; almost panicked, for once.

He shook Tenteon's hand in a demand for attention.

"Do you feel it, too, Te? The unhappiness? The *sick* vibrations of these dying plants? I know we are blocked from full receipt of their terrifying agony, yet, still I am moved by it. I feel chilled, as though snow and an unknown winter were upon us. I do not like this at all! Other things I can sense, too. There is a viciousness in those weaving vines that embrace the tall trees so closely. They are robbing them of their strength. Such things should not be!"

Fourforl paused, then continued vehemently:

"Let's go back and cast our pleas with the dissenters against this horror."

Tenteon's face was strangely calm. He shook his head.

"I should never do so. Forl," he said movingly. "Do not forget this is also a lesson in achievement. Should we destroy these last evidences of past stages, we would disbelieve, before long, that they were ever quite so horrible. There is something else here, too . . . . I don't know yet just what it is . . . a message, something we have forgotten, in our strength. I feel a new stirring of some inexplicable truth we fail to understand, here in this misery. Oh, I can't explain it . . ."

He broke off abruptly, sensing opposition and stubborn disbelief in Fourforl.

"Anyhow, we can't quit now. This is an Enlargement, you know."

Fourforl nodded uncomfortably.

"I still do not see it as right or necessary," he argued, as the vegetational chaos surged in upon them like a swarm of angry hornets. The young plants shouting merrily in sunshine, weeping in shade. The stronger boasting green dictatorship, the weaker despairing, suffering, dying. These were the chloroplast patterns that beat about them in a compress of every known emotion.

"Then go into a trance, and I'll tow you along to the atavists," suggested Tenteon, "I, for one, do not intend to miss any of this lesson."

His message was non-committal, for how could he explain to Forl, or to anyone, what he was sensing purely by intuition? He could not even translate his emotions to himself—this intermingling of hitherto unknown vibrations of agony, terror, and slow death into the pattern that was himself, who had never known these *downbeat* rhythms before. The contrast between this Jungle and the well-ordered world he knew, where the majority

of the numbers engaged themselves as landscape artists, was incredible. Over all of earth, even plants knew perfection, and those past their prolonged prime met instant disintegration without suffering this slow desolation, this unequal struggle. Nowhere else was to be found this darker half of the cycle. Even as all humans, finally passing centuries-long living and lapsing into inevitable senility at last, knew wonderous peace-drugs before the finality of death, so were plants and animals treated, only with a more rapid form of euthanasia.

In this, then, one of the hardest Lessons, this tragic *downbeat* almost overwhelmed him. As for Forl, Tenteon suddenly knew the other boy could never share the emotional range he was experiencing. He felt annoyed, for some unknown reason, and found himself wishing Forl would go into trance and leave him to his deep absorption. Perhaps alone he could somehow discover that hidden truth he only fringed upon recognizing.

But Fourforl was stubborn.

"I'll stand it," he gritted. "The atavists at least have health, even if they are horrible in outline. Ears, ugh! I can hardly bear the thought of vizing them, let alone touching, as we were advised to do for complete comprehension. Eyes have hardly seemed as bad to me, for, though our vision is much superior without the misinterpretations of "sight," still I can accept those. And noses! What monstrosities those must be! Can you even conceive of such ungainly protuberances, Te?"

But Tenteon was far away in focus again. Through the Jungle his fast mind leaped, was buffeted and staggered by the vast panorama of conflict and despair. Seeking hidden truths desperately, by adroit manipulations he had shorted his blanker mechanism, and mind-naked, faced the reality he sought.

Wave after black wave the impressions washed through him; impacts that shook and shocked him to the core of his being. Of the society of which he was a part, a society of which concentrated upon intellect, and cottoned-off feelings, nothing in his previous experience had prepared him for these primitive emotions that now flooded his body, pounding away at the myriad nerve-centers as though each were to be shattered into innumerable fragments.

Torn by countless conflicts, his mind reeled. *What to do? How to solve this chaos? What to concentrate on? What's the sense of it all? Oh, what's the use? Why go on living?*

Down . . . down . . . black waves of melancholia pulled him . . .down into some unnamed well of desperation over their plight . . . his plight . . . He found himself in a deadly darkness of mood; so that almost he ceased to struggle. A wish came to him there, a wish long forgotten by his race . . . a desire to give himself up to this hopelessness . . . to cease to be . . .

"Blank out, you fool," he warned himself desperately. "This is more than you bargained for. To translate this into symbols of man's struggle through time's dread past floods the mind with horror and depair. You must erase this impact to stay sane." And below this warning lay the deeper dread. What was happening here would leave a violent, and irrevokable print; *trauma; re-frame?*

The numbness of an unwanted amnesia began to cover his last dreadful thoughts. In desperation now he sent forth into the Jungle a last beseeching plea. *Truth . . . some truth that I was searching for . . . truth— or illusion? No! Truth!*

For he had found it! Yes, somewhere here it lay hidden! He grasped towards it like a drowning swimmer.

Courage? That was it; the courage in survival; courage against all odds. A will to fight for survival. Everywhere about him now he found the common denominator that reduced chaos into solvable factors.

Concentrating now, breaking a single plant down now into its separate components, he found himself savoring the crash of victory against unequal foes. His mind was centered upon a diseased plant. He found battle within himself as he sensed the green sap pouring warrior cells into an arena where yellow fungus in a horde was assaulting structure and killing off young leaf cells. Sadly, wisely, he realized it was a losing battle, but the bravery of the green fighters was magnificent! And yet, and yet, as they fought, they achieved a final victory, after all. In their forming seed they were storing a chemical resistance, now, instead of using it all uselessly against their enemy. Their young would fare better, even though the parent plant had lost!

Tenteon's mind instinctively sought the elements of a more powerful formula he could supply to rout the horrid fungus; then he checked himself, and turned his mind away, pityingly neutral. In this area it was not for him to interfere. The past lived here in all its apparent injustices.

Calm again, and far more po-

tently aware, Tenteon suddenly realized that beside him, Fourforl had started, and gasped.

"What is it?" Tenteon's mind reached out inquiringly.

Something had slithered coldly across Fourforl's perceptions in a moving pattern of eerie liveness. Tenteon picked up the echo of the alien presence.

"Something . . .alive here?" Fourforl said incredulously. "I vaguely recognized it . . . and yet . . .It's nothing listed, Te!"

Tenteon had focussed it now, too, and as the chill, sliding pattern, in all its reality, flashed across his viz-cells its atomic framing, malignantly alive, he felt an instinctive revulsion stir in him.

"It is a reptile!" he said, unbelievingly. "Yet reptiles have supposedly been extinct for some eras." His memories were stimulated.

"More than that," he added excitedly, "it is a venominous reptile, a deadly one. A coral snake, if my studies are correct. And close, too."

Adrenalin poured stimulatingly through their systems, but different reactions came into play in the two.

For the first time in his life, Tenteon felt true primal adventure stir in him. *Like the green warrior cells,* he thought exultantly, and instant coordination of mind and muscle found him with a forked stick of the right dimensions in his grasp. *But I shall win this battle and carry back a wonderous trophy to a world who has forgotten the reality of this malignance?* He leaped valiantly forward.

Fourforl had also reacted, but in opposites. His mind had concentrated upon destruction, gathered force, and waves of annihilation radiated forth, focussed. The snake-pattern dissipated into a free confusion of random element. Oxygen, carbon-dioxide, lighter elements and compounds dispersed upward to mingle with the atmosphere. Carbon, calcium, silicate— all heavier atoms sifted earthward in fine ash. With one radiant burst, the snake was no more.

"You idiot," Fourforl stormed at Tenteon, "What do you think you are doing with that stick? You have no business risking yourself to poisoning. No telling what harmful effect might have come of it." Fourforl paused in ludicrous bewilderment. "Not that any could . . ." he finished off lamely; a bit crestfallen, but still sure he had done the right thing.

Tenteon looked down at the ashes. An unknown protest stirred bitterly within him. As he turned

away, silently, the symbol of the forked-stick moved from hand into mind—and burned itself there.

Something had happened. What, he wasn't sure, but something. *Forl was afraid,* he told himself. *Afraid—and yet fear is a recessive trait. None of us need know fear.*

They neared the settlement of atavists next, leaving the uncleared jungle behind. Here healthy banana and nut trees abounded as part of the theraphy of keeping the atavists happy; farms, too, to give them such occupational labors as their pathetic primitive natures demanded. It was all, of course, completely unnecessary, but it seemed to give a curious economic security to some of the more backward to be able to go forth and reap these pulpy symbols of a lost materialism.

Fourforl grunted impatiently.

"I've had about all I need of this history lesson," he said in weary contempt. "It will take some time to get back to norm after that adrenalin-add. All I intend to do is verify the unpleasant physical handicaps of these exhibits, and then get back to Centre to relax. Hurry it along, Te."

Tenteon was cold with his reply.

"You can go on, then. I still have much curiosity to satisfy before I'm through here. There is much to be learned from these primitives besides physical detail. I wish also to study the curious rhythms of their minds. To find out why they are as they are. Why they lack the mental ability to control surface-flow and be as ourselves. If you for example, found yourself cursed by an external appendage, you could, at will, shift cells and remove it. These throwbacks refuse to will it. They cherish their curious features; yes, even doubt that they are replaced in us by far superior senses. Why, Forl? I am interested in finding out."

"They are practically mindless," sniffed Fourforl. "You know that. Why study this useless data so avidly?"

"I wonder," said Tenteon cryptically.

But they were among the atavists now, and he fell silent, as did Fourforl, for sheer astonishment was upon them.

The physical features, repulsive to them, were the least part of the unbelievable make-up of these primitives, after all. A few of the group retained all three attributes; some lacked the ears; some the noses. The outward focussing eyes seemed the major organ they wished to retain—against all logic. For this was the most deceptive of all the old senses, since it perceived only the outside, seemingly solid sur-

facing of matter, and never the pattern of inner structure and ceaseless motion that was so necessary to true perception. Since all things, organic, inorganic, and gaseous had motion, they saw pitifully little through these falsely stabilizing and so-limited optics. Small wonder their entire patterns were so stunted and warped!

Even Fourforl was intrigued.

He forgot his hurry and stood lost in rapport with sensations so questionably odd that he could not help but want to explore—to dip into the structure of this youth he now confronted, near his own age—to lie tranced and unthinking and allow his perceptions to flow out through the tiny irises; to perceive this nearly flat, incredibly compact world! It was too rich an experience to miss. To find these solid *structures* instead of the thick-thin areas of moving atomic masses their minds know as reality.

Of a sudden, though, Fourforl lost his appreciation. He began feeling blocked-in; stiffling in some horrid thickness; smothering in a darkened closet of ancestral origin.

He activated and hastily withdrew from the arena of that primitive mind he had entered in exploration. Breathing hard, he drew in gulps of free-whirling atoms.

Fourforl had had his first experience with claustrophobia! He firmly resolved to never again so envolve himself.

Tenteon was likewise engaged, but he suffered no smothering nor panic. Through his actual "seeing" the surface-world so, he marveled at the differences thus envolved. Theoretically, a primitive might become dizzy and very confused, could he but change places and try to use viz-cells. Ancients had often complained of "dizziness." He turned his speculations back to the view, and contemplated composing a sympho-rhythm based upon this experience for his next recital.

An integrate answer came to him almost immediately. First he would double-spin intricate arrangements of spectro-flow, until the minds of his audience relaxed into hypno-receptive; then, slowly, he would drop into a sub-atomic movement, so that all motion would seem primitively stilled. Through this mist of silence, slowly he would ment a great ball representing the primal eye, which would engulf his audience. Through that, then, he would pierce the structure of the retina, len, and iris, and present this strangely surfaced box-world.

Tenteon grinned at the idea. It was, he thought, a new approach. It should serve well as the thesis the Mentors would expect from this Enlargement.

Fourforl didn't know it, but

what Tenteon was planning would be very likely to cause a return of his claustrophobia, along with that of others. Right now, he sought Tenteon's nearness for reassurance.

"Te," he complained, "how do you suppose they stand it? That fenced-in feeling almost smothered me. Eyes, indeed! Why, their very "colors" are incredibly harsh, crude and indelicate, but the surfacing was worst of all. Not to be able to see through, beyond, and all about, for spacing. It's maddening!"

Tenteon looked at his comrade curiously.

"It did not affect me that way, Forl," he commented. "I found it inspiring, in its way." *Fear, again, another kind of fear! Why?*

Fourforl shook his head incomprehensively.

"You are strange, today, Te," he mented, doubtfully. "Never before have I felt the distance between our numbers like this."

But once again Tenteon dispelled his foreboding with laughter.

"It's the artist in me, old sobersides," he depreciated, "all artists are wacky. I've been absorbing the primates to provide contrast. You know, yourself, that the patterns of the ancients are widely appreciated in mento-pict exhibits. It is too bad you find yourself disinterested. They have value."

"True enough," begrudged Fourforl. "They may have value to some, but for me, no. Ready to go yet?"

Tenteon drew a deep breath and set his jaw. What he was about to propose was heresy!

"I intend to see Old Johm before I leave here," he stated flatly.

Fourforl's outraged burst of opposition was little more then he had expected—for Old Johm was out-of-bounds.

Many were the controversies that the Elders had conducted concerning him. Some declared him totally deranged; others, that he was merely senile and refused the peace-drugs. A few, a very few, most of them unconventional Thinkers, held that there was a mystery about the Ancient. Yet none of them would say what that mystery was. They only hinted, and their hints were so fearful or ridiculous that the other Elders refused to accept their validity. Should they begin to do so, they would be admitting that a primitive—an eyed, eared, nosed primitive, a hairy one,—was beyond even themselves in his concepts of the absolute. Impossible! Those few who would name Johm an Avatar instead of an atavisit had indeed let their imaginations run away with them.

Small wonder Tenteon was intri-

gued. His ten-pattern literally fed on such mysteries in a world otherwise so unravelled of wonders.

". . .So!" Fourforl was finishing off, "This then was the source of your over-excitement! You'll really be H-bombed for this, if you insist upon such out-and-out defiance of regulation."

"Then let me be," Tenteon said fiercely. "For I do insist. This is, and has been for long, my main objective. My intent to see Johm caused my former failures to pass the Reactive Exams for this particular Add—and now that I am at last here, nothing can stop me from seeing him."

"This will get you Re-framed for sure," insisted Fourforl in genuine horror, seeing argument would get him nowhere.

"I'll risk that, too."

Tenteon moved determinedly off, settling the point.

Fourforl, unwilling to accompany him, yet equally unwilling to be left behind when they were supposed to stay together, at length followed, nearly choking with rage.

Old Johm lived in a primitive make-shift of a hut near the edge of the jungle. It was one he had built single-handed, ignoring the immaculate structure that had been provided for his comfort.

He was seated in a rickety, hand-woven chair under a shade tree, engaged in solitary reflection when the two boys approached.

His flowing silvery hair gave him a singularly striking outline in contrast with the stream-lined features of the new race. His equally silvery beard itself seemed to bristle with the wrath he loosed upon the two as they drew near.

"What are you young nincompoops snooping around here for?" he shouted angrily. "Don't you find enough specimens to satisfy your confounded curiosity without having to disturb an old man's contemplations?"

"See there!" said Fourforl spitefully, loosing some of his own wrath. "That's what you get! Far from respecting our advanced race, this old madman hurls insults at us. It is all I expected of him."

But Tenteon was scanning the raging ancient impassively, unruffled by his ire. Piercing through the old man's bluffing, hé sensed a strange loneliness there, a deep-set hunger for understanding.

"Yes, I call your kind 'nincompoops'!" Old Johm had picked up Fourforl's mental tirade, although he refused to exchange telepathic thought. Stubbornly, he chose to shout in that outlandish oral way of his.

"You think eyes, ears, a nose, and

hair a disgrace," he continued, bitterly, "and yet I say that I forsee a far worse end for your race than hair and features, unless you put away your complacency and face your destiny with a courage you seen to have forgotten the meaning of."

Fourforl snorted derisively.

"And what, old hirsute, might that 'worse end' be?" he inquired, indulging this lunatic.

Johm gave him one withering look of scorn, and turned away. Fixing his eyes on some distant goal, he spoke solemnly, sadly, almost as though to himself:

" . . . .The escapes they choose," he lamented. ". . . The blindness of them! Aye, but the 'lame and the halt and the blind shall always be with us'," he quoted, and then added, accusingly. "Yea, they *are* lame though their bodies are perfectly fleshed; yea, they *are* blind, though their vision pierces the very structure and every movement of the atoms; yea, they *are* halt, indeed, for they perceive not the ultimate goal they must ever seek. To know the mountains best, they must be seen from the lowest plains. You mountain-dwellers know well your heights alone!"

Fourforl doubled up in a paroxysm of hysteric glee.

"'By the beard of the prophet'," he gurgled, "now I appreciate that ancient quip. This oldster thinks, because he had a beard and can quote obscure parables, that he is, in all rights, to be considered a seer. This is rich, no?"

"Perhaps, then, you are wiser than our Elders?" Tenteon cut into his derision coldly. "Why, only a short time ago, you were upholding their vast wisdom. Yet even they are undecided about Johm and his 'obscure' parables."

Cut to the quick, Fourforl withdrew all thought into an anger-hardened shell of hate.

Old Johm's eyes swung back to focus upon Tenteon's face in startled wonder.

Tenteon leaned forward tautly.

There was contact between them, and suddenly Tenteon began filling with a strange elation. His mind was intent upon an unprecedented phenomena. For he had, by some miracle of intuition, found the *pattern* of Johm; found a mind-flow of sheer, unimaginable power in the simple primitive rhythm—a power his race had failed to recognize because of its very simplicity. The strong rhythm thundered through his stunned perception. He found it sparked by the lightning of a determination and purpose unquestionably the opposite of tranquillity! The chaos of the jungle echoed there, the eternal struggle; the conqueror and the

conquered strangely balanced.

Tenteon suddenly threw a group of high-abstracts inquiringly forward to this alien mind, opening to him its seemingly disordered and inconceivable values.

Faster than the mental-bloc which would have denied knowing, the abstracts were acknowledged and added to by still higher potentials.

The postulate is survive; yet not merely to survive! (Why are most seed winged?) The only eternal surety is— change! Stasis is a cycle completed by death.

The symbols were above *four*-frequency, and Fourforl remained totally unaware of this exchange between an immature *ten* and a seemingly mad atavist. A mature abstract *nine* theorist would never have dreamed of trying such a test. But Tenteon was an adolescent unpredictable, perhaps the first with a yet plastic imagination ever to face this indomitable primitive. And the unpredictable had drawn forth the hidden factor.

During the exchange, Fourforl had been attempting to communicate again with Tenteon. Finding himself totally ignored and completely left out of things, he now tugged bodily at Tenteon.

"Enough is enough, Te! Quit getting side-tracked in these intense day-dreams of yours. You've had enough, and perhaps the Mentors will judge—too much—" he added, accusingly. "If you hadn't fooled them, you wouldn't even be here today. I've felt a queerness in you the whole trip, and now I say we must go!"

"Very well," Tenteon agreed quietly, "but don't feel that way about it, Forl. Our number-groups are too widely separated for you to judge me. Little else could be expected from our different Adds. I suspect the Mentors had a reason for sending us together, however. You are a perfect damper for my over-enthusiasm. I am truly sorry if I have puzzled you, but I cannot change my number to conform with yours—such a conformity would not even be logical."

Fourforl acknowledged the point, but it did little to relieve the unbearable tensions built up by this day's enlargement of sense-data. He whirled away nervously, and Tenteon matched his speed, radiating good-will to soothe his comrade's mood.

They passed over the vicious jungle rapidly, escaping its dark, depressiveness in mere seconds.

Now sweepingly beautiful green hills spread below them, peacefully sunning.

It was here that Tenteon slowed spreading his arms in an encompassing gesture of appreciation.

"What now? Fourforl spun back disgustedly, his patience worn to a frazzle.

Tenteon motioned.

"This great peace we return to suddenly inspires me to compose," he explained. "A contrast, perhaps, to that dark background of elemental chaos . . ." he paused, looking at his companion as though seeking a similar emotion.

Fourforl sighed a bit ruefully, too weary to hit any responsive chord.

"That's for you, Te," he said, shortly. "I have not been so inspired. If I don't go through detensing soon, I fear the consequences. I feel strained beyound endurance. I seek relaxation for my own good, but *tens,* I know, require tension in order to sublimate mood. That is your way of de-nerving, not mine."

"I should not wish to detain you, then," said Tenteon considerately. "Let our paths part here. I shall drift in slowly, hoping for favorable results in composition."

"Then I'll leave you to your solitude," said Fourforl, "and report you in composition to your Mentor. Better bring in something good. A sympho-rhythm, preferably. You do them so well, already."

"I shall try," said Tenteon. "Ease up and I'll see you at Prem tonight, then."

"A sly expression drew itself into the corners of Fourforl's mouth.

"Not at Prem, tonight, you won't," he disagreed. "I have better things to do than to puzzle at stuffy old abstracts."

Tenteon threw up a shield to hide his disapproval. He'd upset Forl enough today already. To make known his attitude towards this new rage that was sweeping the lower neurals with such excitement would only result in further futile misunderstandings.

Tenteon had attended one meeting of the Shape-Changing, and that had been enough for him. The idea had momentarily intrigued him: this flowing of cells into new and unknown formations; pseudopods, tentacles, amorphous and uncrystallized forms . . . It had seemed to him, at first, that something new should come from this experimentation with form; and yet it had not. Instead there was only a sensuous delight in the shifting of energies; a dangerous narcissism.

Something both attracted and yet repelled about the process. He could easily understand how it might become habit-forming. It held an odd, yet somehow evil, fascination.

"Your choice," he shrugged "Viz you later."

"X-O" agreed Fourforl, and almost immediately vanished in the

direction of Centre, never once realizing he had been gotten rid of neatly, and also had agreed to carry a false report to the Mentors for Tenteon.

"So you are back so soon," commented the aging Avatar, Johm.

"You knew I would come," said Tenteon humbly. "I would almost co-ag that you . . . willed it. You are a strange one, Johm. What are you doing here, among the atavists? You and I both know that you could will yourself to be as perfect as you choose. Why are you not with our great Elders, refleshed and healthy, Johm? Answer me that."

Johm looked at him piercingly.

"It is too far removed from the Jungle," he said, simply. "In an environment such as yours I might be tempted to forget the great lesson I find here."

"I cannot grasp your meaning," Tenteon admitted, blankly.

"What about you and the Forked Stick?" asked Johm, perceptively. "Do you not understand that symbol you cherish all unknowingly?"

"No," cried Tenteon, " . . .but you do! Teach me the meaning of the forked stick," he pleaded earnestly.

"Nay, lad, I jested. You are too young to try in fire," said Johm regretfully.

"Who will learn then?" countered Tenteon. "The Elders have studied you, and sought your meaning. Even the greatest of them knows only your riddle and never the answer. Nor have I even heard of one who has found the pattern of your mind before, or it would have been told."

"I have tried to show them," said Johm sorrowfully.

"But they have lived on the mountain top too long?" queried Tenteon.

Johm started.

"You knew what I meant?" he asked, pitifully eager.

Tenteon shook his head.

"I know, and yet I don't know," he admitted. "I feel the answer, here, inside, and yet it is a bird in a covered cage. I do not even know its shape, let alone how high it could fly, could I but release it. It flutters blindly—but I think you know it well."

" It flies where lack of air might kill it because of its very daring," said the old man. "It swoops into dark chasms where in utter darkness it might dash headlong onto the jagged rocks . . ."

"And yet, in doing so, it is brave above all things," finished Tenteon wonderingly. "What makes it so?"

"I cannot tell you by word, nor

by symbol," said Johm. "Men are wrong who even try to define it. It is the binder of all patterns—this unseen flier—and who has named it rightly? I, to myself, yes; but to another, never!"

"I have touched minds with many wise Elders," said Tenteon, trembling, "yet never have I felt as I feel now, before your wisdom. Never has my pattern mingled with another's in the likeness I find now in yours. You are a *ten*, too, Johm, but a *ten* such as the world has never known, or else forgotten. Teach me to be like yourself."

"I cannot," said old Johm. "The Lesson is too bitter. Your pattern would alter. Leave now, I beg of you, for the temptation is great—and I might weaken."

Tenteon laughed, and choked on a sob.

"I cannot," he cried, torn between exultation and despair. "It is already too late. I felt it in the Jungle, for I but joked with Forl. My Blanker was easily shorted. I caught the full-scale vibrations of all the plant-patterns from birth to the last thin gasp before death. They echoed a pattern the men of the ages have trod. I didn't know I was changing, then. I only felt. . .shaken, uprooted in the very core of existance."

"But you didn't blank out?" asked old Johm incredulously; "through all that storm—you didn't blank out . . . you rendered useless the escape-mechanism unwisely conditioned in you by your culture?"

"I almost blacked out," admitted Tenteon. "I very nearly failed, but the green warrior cells saved me. They were so brave to the bitter end. Their seed will fare better."

"Yes, I know," said Johm. "I walk among them every day to renew my courage."

"I—I begin to understand the lesson—now," said Tenteon. "I shall remain here and walk with you, Johm."

Old Johm shook his head.

"No, son," he said gently, "it is not necessary. You are quick, quick with your greater perceptions. Only briefly, in trance, can I enter the world of inner-senses you ever tread. You needed enter the jungle but once to discover what it took me long to understand, Only when, if ever, you lose faith in your goal need you go there again. For you must see now what is wrong with your race."

Tenteon nodded, half-doubting yet.

Old Johm understood that remnant of doubt; for what was needed was so overwhelming in its sweep that the boy was shaken to his depths. All that was placid in

life would be stormed and uprooted. Dangers, unknown and fearfully strange; horrible deaths would come again to youths of this peaceful world. Tenteon didn't know if he could condone this truth. No wonder the Elders had called this old Avatar mad. His theory was beyond sight; and their defenses were strongly fortified.

And yet Johm's, and the Jungle's, theories were valid; so very valid!

Johm's next words were carefully studied.

"Some remained fishes, boy. Even to this day—for the brave genes died when they weren't heeded. The urge was lost forever to those who refused to dare the unknown elements of land. Some got as far as land, yet preferred tree-tops to the questionable safety of caves. Even now, some cling stubbornly to the unbeneficial drawbacks of eyes and materiality. And then—your race, Te—the problem of your race! They have conquered all evils caused by environment. They are peaceful, united, and totally without pain. The world echoes their rhythm. They seem like, sound like, should be god-like, and yet they are not. What would you say was wrong, boy?"

"I do not know clearly," replied Tenteon. "I could guess, though."

"Yes?" Johm encouraged.

"They have reached a peak. They are satisfied, and seek no further change. They fear change; and fearing change means lack of courage; in full sum, a fear of death!"

"And do you—fear death?" inquired the Atavar.

Tenteon studied himself.

"I might not," he declared, "if I could die for a Cause." He was thinking of the green warrior cells again.

"But there are no more Causes. Is that it, lad? Is your world then perfect? Are all problems solved?"

"The environment around us would be hard to improve," said Tenteon thoughtfully. "In small ways we progress, but they seem unimportant, now. It is *ourselves* we cannot master, somehow." He recalled Fourforl's reaction specifically; his recessive traits of fear; then his mind went on to the number-groups, and overwhelmingly the imperfections of integral ability smote him. What was this lack of absorptive perception? Environment now could not be blamed. Equality of intelligence quota was available to all, yet it was not achieved. . ."

"There, then, is your problem, indeed." Old Johm pointed the way.

"How was steel tempered, in the old metallic age?" he asked, and answered his own question: "By exposure to extremes, boy, extremes! Heat and chill gave it a strength the untempered metal would never know. And how do plants resist the attacks of wilt, blight, and dry-rot? Only by fighting, and passing the fruit of their struggle on to their seed, that they might more successfully resist. Great lessons, those!"

Old Johm shook his head regretfully.

"If all were like you, Te, I should not worry. The metal of which you are forged was tempered long ago. Tried of such fires and such freezings that every cell in you is steeled. There is no weakness left in you to betray that tempering. So now you, perhaps of your generation alone, for I have found no other so resilient, and I, of mine, know the answer. More fire! More freezing! More battle, alone! Those build up the progressive genes in the race. If they are too soft, they will melt in the furnance; they will crack from the cold. But some will temper true. And, lad, this testing must go on."

"But why?" cried Tenteon despairingly, his vivid imagination seeing a panorama of eternal struggle. "Why can't we go on evolving peacefully? Why this epic of pain and struggle?"

"Why?" reflected Johm. "Why did not your companion *learn* in the jungle today, and from the atavists, instead of shrinking? No, one learns only by participation; never from detached observation. And *wanting* to participate is a necessary factor. It cannot be an idle gesture easily withdrawn at the first obstacle encountered. True, I have no answer to that deeper riddle of our unknowable urges. No man has ever found that answer. He only knows a hunger, an unsolved desire to push on from the known to the unknown. The way I answer this, to myself, is, thusly: Man was born a single cell once, in the Unreal, where a drop of water was his universe. From that minute beginning he struggles blindly towards the Real. Learning all he can is important, for the Real is the total of every factor."

"That is true enough," cried Tenteon. "I feel that reaching, here inside. But how small a fraction we are: how blind, how lost, how alone."

"And yet—how important!" added Johm "For I vision us as building blocks that will add up to the Real, when we achieve our goal. We wrestle chaos for more order, pushing back the black boundries of oblivion. Every spark

of us lights up that darkness. Each of us a warrior, and every warrior aiding in that conquest. The cowards retreat towards blackness, the undetermined form middle-rank, and the sure-of-purpose march bravely forward into the front lines. All an analogy—but I believe in this."

"And my race, then?"

"Are indeterminates, mostly," admitted Johm. "Seeing no goal. They have reached the apex of a cycle, and unless some miracle saves them, they will suffer the fate of all cycles. They will decline."

Tenteon disagreed.

"Cycles were the pattern of ancient history," he admitted, "but how can they hold true now? How can anything destroy this new civilization we have built? Our world is at peace. There are no dissentient elements to rise in rebellious destruction. Such equality as ours leaves nothing to undermine."

"I only wish it were so," said Johm fervently, "but your race, Te, faces the greatest danger of them all. The higher the peak the greater the distance to depths below. And your world is in an unparalled state of achievement." He sighed. "I am almost tempted to say that it must equal the perfection of that mythical Garden of Eden. Yet, even now, the snake of discontent slithers invisibly through it—the apple of the envy of wisdom dangles temptingly from the tree of life. No, Tenteon, your Eden could not be conquered, but —it could be dissolved!"

"Dissolved?" Tenteon was incredulous.

"Aye, dissolved," said Johm, inflexibly unrelenting. "Returned to that chaos from whence it once emerged and so slowly and torturously conquered. Retrogression to that very primordial cradle!"

A shudder swept over Tenteon. John had told him too much already for him to disbelieve further. The blackness of the unknown, disintegrative horror rose like a nightmare to blot out his reasoning. What its cause would be, he could not guess, dared not; but that it threatened, he could not deny.

Johm's perceptive mind reached out to reassure him with waves of pure courage.

"You've come this far with me," he told Tenteon. "We'll fight it out, you and I. The worst is over, as soon as you find out what your enemy will be. Only the unknown is frightening, lad. We know what we're fighting, and fighting for. The rest will be easier."

"You . . . you know what the danger is, then?"

"I do," said Johm, "and there

we have the advantage over the older cycles. We perceive this time before it is too late to stop the process. The older cycles did not, and so fell. For instance, in the old technocracy of the machine age, few people realized that machinery had become their masters. They allowed their minds to become absorbed in the false values, the propaganda, promoted by a few master-minds mad with the lust of power, via machinery, until they had lost all ability to do their own thinking. Thus they were blasted by false idealisms, prejudices, and completely lacked ability to face the real problems. They denied their slums and underprivileged by looking the other way towards luxuries that cost much in human lives to attain. They fattened and died of their own gluttony, never realizing that their excessess were symptoms of their mental starvation. That could never happen here. The hungers of our unfulfilled are for experiences, not useless over-possession of material objects. No, your race, Te, is hungry for a thing nearer the Real, but they desire something they have not the courage to earn. Now do you know what the danger is?"

Tenteon's mind was full of realization and sorrow.

"I know now," he agreed. "You are speaking of the experiments that go on among the lower neurals —the changing of shapes. The *tens* have tried to discourage this craze, but it gains impetus."

"Yes," said Johm. "It is gaining by leaps and bounds. The wisest see the folly, but are helpless to prevent it. And the lower numbers cannot perceive that this changing of structure, this experimentation with varying form, is not an enlargement but a regression." He shook his head ominously. "Ah, but this hunger for newness and the different tempts the incompletes; yet this is not *newness*—but a retreat to the amoebic! For I perceive, in the end, that they would wallow in the muds of their primordial beginning, losing all creative will, when this great cycle swings into the down-arc. And forbidding is useless, now. They would rise against the *nines* and *tens* and pull everything down again to the miasmal swamps. There is only one way to save them, lad—and that is to offer something more tempting."

"Then we are lost," groaned Tenteon, "for the *tens* are ever seeking, but what they find are in symbols beyond the comprehension of the lower neurals. Their findings cannot bridge the gap to enthuse these more primitive hungers." Tenteon rubbed his forehead in agony. "I wish I had not

learned," he burst out. "For to know, and yet to be unable to prevent our decline is worse than not knowing."

Johm's arm encircled his despairing form.

"Lad, lad," he counseled, "you are too young to accept defeat, Leave the burden of that to the old and weary. I say there is a way that even the imperfect men of the machine age knew and sought. A way that was both curse and inspiration; a despair, and finally a taboo. It is time to break through the ancient curse now; to outlaw now useless laws."

Tenteon opened his overwrought mind to Johm's urgings.

"New stepping stones," Johm told him softly. "New building materials. The Elders refused me and called me mad when I insisted the only answer lay in the . . . stars!"

Tenteon's life-long conditioning revolted in violent protest. For he, like all children, had looked long and longingly skyward at night, and asked the hungry questions. And to him, and to all other children, the answer had had to be repeated, reinforced, driven in over and over to form conviction. The stars spelled Death.

It was this conviction he repeated now to Johm.

"Death?" Johm shook his head. "The true death here is this fatal conviction. Even now the propaganda of fear does its deadly work against instinct, against the intuition that is man's blind hope of salvation. This—in spite of the fact that every time man looks up at the stars the same old hunger and yearning to be away, to reach up among them and know their wonders, catches in his throat with unworded desire. Go back, lad, back to your childhood and listen. Tell me what you heard then, before men convinced and stunted you with their answer? What you hear now, unless you keep your eyes intentionally turned from the heavens?"

"It is always what man cannot have that he wants the most," Tenteon repeated the cynicism defiantly.

"That," snorted Johm, "is the worst sophism man ever produced. Man can have anything he wants if he wants it badly enough to work for it. Nothing of value was ever easily attained. And negative thoughts lead to negative results."

"There seems to be a fallacy in your statement," Tenteon said, defending himself. "History proves it. For you can't say that man didn't want to reach the stars badly. He wanted to with all his heart. Countless numbers gave their lives in the attempt, and died more

strangely and horribly than men had ever died before. Their wishes were their graves. They could not conquer the alien factors that brought death in the heavens. They only desisted when they found it useless to try."

"Brave men, heroic graves!"

Johm's face was a study of mingled pity and determination.

"We have been speaking all this time in terms beyond individual definition or participation," he added, slowly. "We spoke of entelechies, cycles of history that stretch beyond man's meagre conceptions. We spoke in terms of a meaning to life which mere living itself does not approach as proof. We agreed on these, but now you reduce your concepts to individuals who have no place in vast philosophies." He sighed, and corrected himself. "Who have no place, and yet shape all. No, lad, there was no fallacy in my statement. *Man* can have anything he wants, if he works toward that goal. Yet—*a* man might fail. *Men* might fail. *Generations* fail. Still, if they cling to their purpose, in the end they will achieve it. Even—" a wry example fell from Johm's lips—"even those who butt their heads against a stone wall would eventually batter down that wall, if enough threw themselves into the effort! But there are better ways of getting past walls. Let us say that the men in history who tried to conquer space had not yet found that better way. For, in reality, they were not ready. They were trying to run away, then, and that motive partially explains their failure. They tried the skies before they had tamed their own earth, boy. What could they do, out there, when they were so powerless here? They tried to go out, full of a defeat, a sickness inside themselves—perhaps to conquer and loot—to spread their misery among the stars. It was not *just* that they should succeed. It was right that they be made to stand and face themselves, until they had done as much as they could do, here. Now, and only now could it be called a crusade. And I think you will lead them, lad!"

Tenteon had absorbed every word that old Johm spoke. Convictions and fears had been swept away by this clean broom of reasoning. The intensity of Johm's purpose burned through his own pattern like wildfire.

He sprang up, blazing like a living sword; like Excalibur, forged by the magic fires of old Merlin.

"Then I shall do it, he cried vibrantly. "Yes, and I will do it, Johm!"

Old Johm sighed then; sighed in final relaxation.

Tenteon, drawn back from his visioning, looked down at the old Avatar, and his mind was stunned by what he saw. For the life-cells of the old man's body were flowing away. His skin wrinkled inward from that loss; he aged visibly before Tenteon's astounded gaze. Yet there was no agony; no regret; no unwillingness in him.

Johm smiled, a soft and tender smile.

"Death," he said, "is the greatest illusion man ever nurtured in his bosom, builded with his fears of change and of the unknown and unknownable. For actually, what *is* Death, outside man's fallacious definitions? Your race called me old, boy—called me senile—but there was no weakness in me. I am old, how old they couldn't begin to guess, for a primitive. But now you must see that there are causes one lives on for, as well as those one may die to further. Yes—and what is death, when one dies—reaching?"

The primitive muscles composing his eyelids collapsed.

And suddenly Tenteon knew—knew only a tremendous will-power had held that aged frame together, without weakening. Knew only an incredible vitality had held even the unwilling atoms in their places against time's impatient command—a vitality all his people lacked.

He bowed his head humbly before that withered and deserted frame for a moment, and then squared his shoulders and moved purposefully away.

Tenteon's Mentor greeted him anxiously, and with mixed emotions, when he returned to Centre.

"I have been greatly concerned over you, Te," he stated; after he had first penetrated Tenteon's pattern suspiciously, as far as his *eight*-neurals could expand their search.

Tenteon's perfect composure was reassuring.

He shook his head in perplexity.

"When Fourforl came in so visibly disturbed, so full of misgivings concerning you . . . ." he paused, " . . . but I should have known, when he said you had remained behind for composition, that you were undisturbed. Poor Forl was far more resistant to the Add than yourself, apparently. It postulated several conflicts he seemed incapable of resolving, unfortunately."

"It was the difference in reactions between our two numbers that upset him far more than the experio-add," commented Tenteon. *Snake of discontent; apple of envy of wisdom in the unfulfilled,* Johm's insight added.

Tenteon's Mentor was startled.

Only a fringe of this last meaning reached him, not enough to consciously recognize. His skin prickled, but he shook off the uncanniness of the feeling.

"Perhaps it was a mistake," he admitted briskly. "We seldom send so widely diverse companions on an Add. But you and Forl seemed so well-adjusted to each other's needs, despite the neural gap, that we made an exception for once. We shall profit from this lesson. Forl was badly shaken."

"Yes," admitted Tenteon. "It was strange, the contrast between us that was brought into the open. To Forl this lesson meant little. To me it was the greatest of them all."

"I found it great, myself," said the Mentor. History was always a wonderful teacher; yet some find it distasteful and insignificant.

"But now, Te—" the Mentor's attitude became stern, "I have come to a less pleasant subject. Disobedience! This calls for certain measures of reprisal. Only the higher neurals can self-hypno the factors of disobedience. You must face the consequences, unless you can produce adequate reason for this defractive action—this visit of yours to the deranged atavist, Johm. It was dangerous beyond my ability to express. Had you lost yourself in that mad pattern, Reframe would have found you a difficult problem to deal with. Have you an explanation for this unwarranted conduct?"

"Has an iron-filing when it leaps towards a magnet?" Tenteon countered obliquely, then sobered when he perceived his Mentor's mind likewise leaping to wild conclusions.

"Wait," he cautioned his elder solemnly. "There was a reason—the most valid reason of them all. Old Johm was dying! Even you would not have denied him the consolation he needed."

"Dying?" The Mentor was shocked. "Old Johm dying . . . Forl didn't tell me that!"

"He did not know," said Tenteon. "He shut the old man's appeal from his mind, having no sympathy for any primitive."

The Mentor probed his student's pattern again, this time somewhat fearfully. Yet he found no flaw. Tenteon's calm was undeniable, even after this totally unexpected, yet most dangerous add of them all.

"Johm dying . . it is almost too incredible to believe," he said sorrowfully. "But if it is so, I must contact the Elders at once." He looked at Tenteon, shaken. "Were you able to ease him?" he inquired pityingly.

"He was stubborn at first,"

Tenteon reassured him, "but finally I set his mind at rest. But," he added, "Johm had no desire for peace drugs."

The Mentor studied his words. He was wise, for an eight. He suddenly knew Tenteon was beyond the grasp of his mind, that the boy could evade and cover his thoughts in an impenetrable blanket composed of his high neural content. Tenteon was indeed ready for a *ten-structor,* so much had he grown in stature during this Add.

Also, the Mentor admitted to himself, this news of the proximity of Death had upset his own powers of judgement temporarily.

"Very well, Te, judgement of your conduct is suspended for the time being. We shall come to you again, later. Now I must hurry. I, among others, wish to see Johm once more before his demise. And he still will accept no peace drug. How strange. For death is the one thing the mind cannot help but struggle against, most painfully," he mused, then moted away without further notice of his pupil.

Tenteon also moted his way.

With sorrow-tinged irony he realized that the Elders would be regretful over Johm's death, after all. Even though they had never understood him, still they knew, in that remote mind-sector of intuition, that he had been the greatest among them. These thoughts gave him much courage for the task that lay ahead.

Tenteon came through his *ten*-probe with flying colors.

His Elders enthusiastically acclaimed his growth, and the surprisingly well-balanced integration of his latest Adds. If there was, secretly in each, a feeling of not-quite-understanding this maturing *ten,* the feeling in the Elders was an individual lack which they did not care to admit to each other.

Originality of concepts, they reassured themselves in a later conference on conclusions, always held this indeterminable factor in any test envolving abstract thought-processes. And Tenteon, they agreed, most assuredly had an original mind. The youth had a freshness of perception a little wild and, as yet, not thoroughly disciplined but admirable in that freshness. Tenteon should go far, given time.

. . .Given time, yes.

But Tenteon felt desperately rushed for time, now that he was fully awakened to danger. The signs of coming disaster magnified in his awareness each minute growth in the threat of the Shape-changers. A sloth, a neglect, not yet openly apparent, was a sign post of catastrophe to come. An ever-dropping attendance at Prem;

an almost unobservable creeping of raggedness into the well-appearance of landscape; an imperceptible slowing in the skill of games once a mastery of form. And in the arts . . . there, more than in anything, showed the germ of disaster.

Under ever-increasing tension, Tenteon struggled mightily with his problem, seeking the solution under a pressure of apprehension that was almost panic.

A greater, far greater mind than his had failed, he realized. And by what means, what possible means, could he touch the Elders' comprehensions, if Johm could not do this thing with logic?

Waking and sleeping he brooded over his problem with an ever-increasing necessity for finding the solution. And sleeping, the knowledge came to him; sleep . . . and seemingly baffling dreams . . . did more for his intentions then all the logic by which he turned the problem in conscious thought.

For gradually the germ of the way spread roots through his mind, until he saw the solution. Saw it was not the Elders he must reach, but the lower neurals. Saw it was not logic he must use to convince. No, logic and the lower neurals had never mixed well. He must use the age-known lure of the politicians of old to achieve his purposes. The lure of promises.

To anyone watching, no inkling of his progress was visible. For he threw himself wholeheartedly into the development of his talents as a composer of sympho-rhythms;— those mental concerts that combined the poetry, artistic imagery, and music of yesteryears.

Fourforl suffered his claustrophobia again, temporarily. (For by this re-action in neurals, Tenteon learned quickly to avoid arousing in his audience the sensation of unnecessary fears.)

Courage became his theme. The presentation of obstacles, and their overcoming by sheer persistance and bravery. And so original were his presentations, so sweeping his concepts of history; of tears and laughter, of courage born of despair; of emotions always mingled with a sure balance of range beyond the ordinary, that rapidly he rose to the rank of the world-famous.

And to be world famous meant that he would be admitted to perform in that astonishing crystal dome where only the outstanding of his race performed. Where the artists, the philosophers, the scientists seated themselves among the vibrant crystals to transmit their visions to the world. To bring harmonious beauty, and information, and inspiration— that was the goal of this ultimate transmitter—

(a far cry from its predecessor, the blaring commercial radio of old, which had only spread . . . confusion . . .)

This night, then, finally, Tenteon entered the crystal tower and seated himself solemnly in the focal-chair. There was about him an aura of purpose that silently lit a fuse of suspended wonder in his audience.

He had been here before, several times, but never quite ready.

Tonight he was ready; and his audience waiting and hungry. As there has ever been, there was here appreciation that surmounted the realm of envy; great art alone produces this miracle of selfless participation.

Tenteon began with a review of some of his more popular compositions; the repetitive element making them more welcome because of that familiarity.

His audience murmured pleased reception.

Next he presented a new theme; more dramatic, more emotional than he had ever previously attempted.

The murmur grew to a tremendous applause of the original performance, ending in a plea for more. . .

A final crescendo swept over them;

They, in imagination, lost weight and were levitated. Up . . . up . . .up . . . they swept through a a goldenly glowing sunset. Up through oranges, crimsons, and subtle shades of rose-violet. Deeper and deeper, through lustrous velvety purples. Sweeping they imagined, into a night-dream. For here was Luna, and through the blackness into which they had suddenly plunged, she beckoned with a fey-bridge of moon-beams upon which they floated like the nisse, the moon-dwellers of ancient myth.

And now the moon grew larger, but bleak and barren. They found that it was not she who beckoned, after all, but farther out on the star-path a planet veiled in gossamer mists. Blue luminous mists like a halo ringed her, and incredibly vivid rainbows broke now and then the dreamy atmosphere.

(Here and there a few Elders murmured dissent. Space, they counseled, was an unwise theme It had fallen from repute among the dreamers . . .)

Still, who could resist the lure?

Nearer now to the planet they swept, and nearer. Piercing the luninous clouds, they floated down into a land fabulously fantastic, wildly wonderful. Delicate shafts of light broke upon deep turquoise waters; marble cliffs lifted majestically from shores of sparkling

sands; opalescent rainbows tinted the time-carven cliffs with jewel-toned reflections.

Emerald green was the growth that sprang fern-like to magnificent heights here. Leaves spun a delicate filagree from lights and shadows. Gay unknown star-flowers spangled the deep lush carpets of shadow-blue moss.

And now, here and there, sprang forth sturdier trees bearing strange fruit that glowed temptingly rosy. Fruit partially like apples, yet totally unknown.

Through all the entrancing views that followed, touring this enchanted world, this fruit gleamed like precious rubies, ever more tempting and tangible. It drew the gaze to it again and again.

Finally imagination began to focus upon it, bodily. Began inquiring into its strange lure. Was it sight? Taste? Structure? What gave it such a strange appeal to the senses? Dissection began and as its components came to mind, heads began to spin; mouths watered; minds strained hungrily towards it. For here was no dreamy fruit of the lotus! No promise of drugged content. No Elysian drifting upon a sea of Lethe. No, of a certainty, not. Such promises were idle jests beside the promise of *this* fruit.

For it was the fruit of achievement. The flowering of an ultimate promise they all yearned towards. Through its juices surged unnamed vitamins that spelled an increase in neurals; building blocks of mind-material. A purification of genes—*genius* for each and every lowly neural. Dominents! *Tens* and more than *tens* for those who dared to seek it.

Final (and original) temptation: Tree of Knowledge!

. . .Yet Tenteon refused to present false promises to them. Danger lurked everywhere, as elemental as the caveman had pictured it to be in primitive symbology. Deadly virus against which they had no defenses. Radioactive elements and unknown rays that shriveled the life-cells. Space-madess, aggravated fears of the unknown. Everywhere Death lurked, and everyone was made to feel it so. All about those glowing trees was an area of blackness betokening death from unguessable sources. Fear drilled the flesh with unknown horrors. And yet . . .eyes sought that fruit, piecing out paths that might be trod in safety to reach the wonderous goal. Minds filled with knowledge of possible death; and with the courage required and requested to brave the dangerous trail.

The applause that poured forth

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was beyond quieting. It swept away the vain protests of *tens* who knew what was happening. *It* surged in an ever-increasing volume of contagious enthusiasm.

And loudest of all resounded the unrestrained cries of the youthful, whose pioneer spirits had been aroused from lethargy. The conditioned acceptance of unjust limits had burst at the seams. New frontiers had been exposed.

"Tenteon," they applauded, "we wish audience with Tenteon. We desire a message from the source. Tenteon!"

"I am here," Tenteon mented, in the race-ritual that had taken the place of the ancient author's stage-bow.

"Tell us where you found the inspiration for this masterpiece," was the collective plea.

Tenteon smiled, reminiscently.

"The frame of it, I found in Old Johm" he said, softly, "and the vision . . ." his thoughts were near mystic " . . . as for that, well, who knows what is dream and what reality?" he asked. "Perhaps I only dreamed that, as I stood gazing at the evening star one night, my mind reached out and touched that far planet in exploration. For there I saw that which I have shown you here, and still I do not know—what is dream, and what—reality."

Vast murmurs overwhelmed him in all manners of reaction. But he was through. He shut his mind away from all men, knowing the seed he had planted would be only too fertile.

"Well, Johm," he told a heroic memory, "it is done! The blood of many will weigh our conscience, but—" he clenched his jaw "—some will temper true."

He buried his weary head in his hands, and an incredible thing happened, an impossible thing; an atavistic duct opened to allow him the consolation of long forgotten tears. Yet, as they fell, Tenteon's startled mind recognized those crystal drops as space-ships, forming . . . one . . . by one . . . by one . . .

THE END

POLITICIAN

By Stanley I. Rowson

Politics can be a devious and, sometimes, sordid game, particularly for the inexperienced. The Chief Technician of the Realm knew this, but with the Council demanding immediate action, and the Organization for Human Government nipping at his heels, he had to jump feet first into the biggest Politics vs. Science battle since the establishment of the New Realm.

THE chairman of the Council rapped for order. He was worried, and showed it. Like most humans of the New Realm he hated responsibility.

Clyde Collett, Chief Technician of the Realm, looked at the chairman and smiled wryly to himself. He thought, *if you only knew—*

The little room quieted and the chairman spoke:

"Gentlemen, I don't like being here any more than you do, so I'll be brief. The plain fact is that the Decider, for the first time in its history, has been making mistakes. Most of them have been relatively minor, but—"

There was a stir, and a plaintive voice interrupted him.

"Why bother us wth that? It's just a Machine, isn't it? What have we got Technicians for?

Collett had expected that. As Chief Technician the Decider—the Machine—was his baby: a sprawling five-year-old baby that its makers had proudly, and justly, called the Ultimate Digital Computer. The first two years it had been Government Advisory Machine, then the "Advisory" had been dropped as a long-suffering United States public had seen what a really efficient, accurate and impartial government could do and had summarily fired every federal politician from the President down, leaving

only the twenty-man Council—plus the Technicians—as a sort of guardian over the Machine. The New Realm dated from that momentous year.

The chairman said patiently, "Hear me out. I wouldn't have called you here over trifles. But last Tuesday's error could have resulted in a first-class disturbance. I shudder to think what might have happened if the credit-ratio summations for that day had actually been carried out. In an economy as delicately balanced as ours we've got to be sure that such a thing doesn't—can't—happen again. That's why I have asked you to come here and have invited Mr. Collett to report to us in official session. Mr. Collett."

Collett came to his feet and pulled his notes from his pocket. He'd say what he could, but he knew he'd have to leave out the big—the astounding, incredible—thing. After all, you couldn't just stand up here with a straight face and tell a solemn body like this that *for three midnights running you'd been engaging in clandestine two-way conversations with a computing machine!*

"Gentlemen," he began, "I can't add a thing to what your chairman has already told you about the recent Machine errors except that judging from their pattern I think we're very lucky they haven't hit us in more vital spots than they have. They've been quite unpredict—"

"What's the matter with the Technical staff?" It was the plaintive individual, interrupting. "Why can't you catch these things? It's your responsibility, not ours. You're well paid—"

Collett didn't owe his job to the Council and he knew it. Nevertheless he answered politely:

"It's mostly a matter of time, sir. A routine check—that's all we've had time for so far—takes about two working days. A really exhaustive search—" He shrugged his shoulders.

The chairman said, frowning, "We appreciate your problem, Mr. Collett. Can you give us even an estimate of how long—"

"At least three days—a week would be better," Collett said decisively. "The job simply can't be hurried. I've got the whole staff on overtime now and will keep them there till we're through—"

Collett turned as a derisive snort ripped from the little public observers' gallery. *Oh oh,* he thought, *here we go again!*

"Mr. Chairman!" A fat, red-faced man stood with his hands propped on the balustrade, his sonorous saw-edge voice filling the chamber. "Mr. Chairman, I want

to make a statement!"

Collett nodded shortly at the chairman's questioning look. The chairman sighed.

"Senator Malloy."

He wasn't really a Senator—he was an ex-Senator—but he loved the title.

"Mr. Chairman, your Technician says he needs more time. Well, I want to say that no amount of time will be enough to undo what this monstrous Machine, this vicious vampire, has done to our fair land. We are human beings, Mr. Chairman—we want no robot rule!"

"You have a suggestion, Senator?" the chairman asked. Collett knew the Senator did and what it would be.

"I have, sir! Stop the Machine! Stop this government by gadget and turn it back to the hands of men where God intended it to be! Give us . . ."

The "hands of men," of course, would be the OHG, the Organization for Human Government, that pensioners' club of disgruntled and unemployed ex-politicians still hoping for another try, and at their prow would be that greatest ex of all, ex-Senator Malloy. Collett thought no thanks, he wasn't having any. And, he believed, neither was the great American public, really and truly free now for the first time since the history-shrouded advent of *homo politico*.

The Senator came up for air and the chairman grabbed the opportunity to say, "Thank you, Senator. We can make no decision, of course, till all testimony is in. Mr. Collett?"

"I've told you all I need—just time," Collett said, and sat down. He had no intention of trying to compete with the Senator's oratory.

The Council was fidgety. They were good men, but life in the Realm was pleasant and they were eager to get back to it. They looked expectantly at the chairman. The chairman fiddled nervously with a pencil. He flicked an apprehensive glance toward the gallery. He hated decisions.

"Well—" He cleared his throat. At last: "Gentlemen, I see no choice but—to grant Mr. Collett his week. If no one objects, we will meet here one week from today and hear a report from you, Mr. Collett, and make a final decision on this matter. No objections? Then we're adjourned."

An ominous snort rolled from the Senator's direction but he never performed without an audience, and his audience was gone. The Council members couldn't get back to their affairs in the Realm fast enough. Collett didn't linger but he was still the last from the room.

He had no sooner hit the corridor

outside than he felt a tap on his shoulder, turned and looked straight into a friendly face under close-cut black hair.

"Well—hello, Frank," he said in pleased surprise. "Were you in the gallery watching the show?"

"Yes." Frank Axelhoff peered closely at Collett. "Thought I might pick up a story. I'm free-lancing now, you know. I could write up the Senator, but he's only got one speech and it's done already. How about it, Clyde? Anything for me?

"Sorry, Frank," he smiled as the other fell in step beside hm. He liked Axelhoff—that went back a long way—but now was no time to turn loose of what he knew, or thought he knew. "Maybe later. As you probably noticed, I've got assorted Councilmen and one Senator on my neck, so I'm having to get a hustle on. I was lucky to wangle that week—"

"Okay." They were on the street now, and paused briefly. "But remember me, will you?" The penetrating look was there again. "Y'-know, Clyde, I've been around you a good bit during the years—and I think there's something here bigger than meets the eye. Writer's hunch, maybe, or maybe it's just that psychologist I started to be coming out. Anyhow, let me know if anything develops that I might use, will you?"

"Sure," Collett said. A brief handshake and he watched Axelhoff stride on down the street. *My God,* he thought, *is it beginning to show? Maybe a good psychologist—or psychiatrist—is what I need.* He hesitated, then shrugged a little shrug and stepped into a waiting helicab that would whisk him swiftly and silently to his little apartment on the far side of Newashington.

The next four days Collett and his staff spent in a frenzied orgy of checking, rechecking and re-rechecking the Government Machine, that fantastic assemblage of electronic and mechanical wizardry that was the real heart of twenty-first century United States civilization. Located squarely in the heart of Newashington, the Machine was a rambling, prodigiously complex grandson of the first Decider Computer put into use by the New York Stock Exchange to eliminate the traditional clumsy, confused, auctioneering procedure on the trading floor. Supply and demand operated as before in that case, only with less bother and more speed, and after the new was worn off everybody was happy. Decider I was followed by Decider II and then Decider III went into municipal government in Racine, Wisconsin, and after that phenomenal success events catapulted breath-

takingly to the inevitable culmination of it all—Government Machine, the Brain of Brains, the Grand Decider.

Collett sat in his little second-floor office in the Machine Building on the fourth day of grace. shuffling papers. The last report from the staff was in, and he'd sent them home—eight unspeakable weary, frustrated men. For there was not one single thing wrong—not one sticky relay, not one recalcitrant scanner, nothing. And also, for four days now, not one Machine error.

Collett shook his head. He was groggy from intense concentration and lack of sleep. He was beginning to wonder about the reality of what had happened last week, the week the errors had begun to show up. He went over it in his mind again, trying desperately to strengthen the conviction that he hadn't dreamed it all.

It had started one night in the control room, that elaborate instrument-studded cubicle in the sub-level of the Building where the ganglionic maze of the Machine's sensory-motor system came to glittering endings where men could touch and read them. He'd turned on the checking circuit, caught the green light and cut a simple query-response test tape at random—it was his nightly routine to check the primary information circuits of the Machine, part of its functioning depending on a daily scanning and absorption of all printed reports and news in the Realm. Before feeding in the tape, he looked up at the translucent screen where the answer should be projected. Standing there in white glowing letters was the single word:

"Hello."

Flabbergasted, Collett dropped the tape he was holding. In sheer reflex he cut another, and fed it in:

"Hello, yourself."

The screen faded and another set of words flashed there, moving across in the manner of a news ticker:

"I am glad to see you respond. Are you surprised at what you see here?"

Collett rubbed a hand over his eyes. He'd been working too hard This couldn't be happening. No Machine could be talking to him. He cut another tape.

"Surprised is hardly the word." As an afterthought: "This is a very good practical joke. I will be glad to find out who is responsible for it."

"It is no joke, believe me," came the answer from the screen. "By the way, did you have one of your usual trival test questions for me tonight?"

Collett looked at the tape on the floor.

"I did. I don't remember what it was. How—"

"It doesn't matter," the Machine flashed. "I'm sure I could have answered it satisfactorily. I really do wish, though, since you feel the necessity to keep checking me, that you would pick some questions that would be more of a challenge to me. I am really quite clever and I'm sure—"

The screen blanked suddenly as a now completely un-nerved Collett snapped off the circuit. He stood a moment, uncertainly, then stumbled shakily from the room.

Ruling out hallucinations, he spent the next day on a solo hunt for bugs in the Big Brain with a wary eye on the actions of his staff. No soap. Nothing wrong. And it was that day the Machine made its first trifling error.

For three nights the farce went on, and each day the frantic check revealed nothing. The second night the Machine, after a few preliminary remarks, delivered itself of an uninvited monologue on the history of scientific method. The third night it began to ingrow on itself and propounded at some length *its* opinions on the American educational system, punctuated by questions from the now quite distraught Collett. After one particularly well-answered—it thought—question, it paused as if preening itself and said:

"I am having trouble classifying myself. What do you think? Am I really a Genius or just a Child Prodigy? I'm not very old, you know. I—"

Unable to bear more, Collett had exited on that one and gone home and to bed. The next day the Machine had made the credit-ratio error which had cost three thousand four hundred man hours of corporate sleeplessness and resulted in the calling together of the reluctant Council.

Collett jumped out of his musing as the telephone rang. He shunted the papers aside and picked up the phone. He stiffened as the caller identified himself. It was Roberts, chairman of the Council. He wasn't happy.

"Mr. Collett, something must be done about this situation. I thought by giving you the time you asked for you'd be able to get to the bottom of the thing and stop these errors. This latest—"

Collett cringed back in his chair, a terrible premonition coming over him.

"What this time, Mr. Roberts? I haven't heard of any errors since —"

Roberts' voice was edgy. He was

a calm man, but something was working on him. "Atomic energy, Mr. Collett, this time. It's too much. We're just finding out that every allocation figure for the last twenty-four hours has been completely out of line. There's a small uproar going on and I'm not sure how long it's going to stay small. We're beginning to get embarrassing questions from every--now, please, Mr. Collett, *have you found anything?*

Collett's "no" sounded weak and unconvincing, but it was the best he could do. Explaining the intricacies of checking the Machine was futile and he had to leave the Council chairman unplacated. He put down the phone and Johnnie Blake, his secretary, ambled over with a newspaper in his hand.

"Hey, chief, see this?" he asked eagerly. Collett winced at the headline and waved it away. Johnnie left.

The phone rang again. This time it was the president of Atomics Incorporated, person - to - person, with assorted purple comments to make on the Brain and its keepers. Collett gave him the same answer he had given the Council chairman, with the same negative results.

"Johnnie," he yelled suddenly to his secretary, "stop the calls. I'm going out."

He went out. In the hall he passed an earnest-looking delegation of officials galloping toward his office. He was glad they didn't know his face. He kept going. He took the down stairs two at a time. In the lobby of the building a telescreen waved and screamed at him. It was Senator Malloy.

" . . . and this latest outrage only proves that the Machine must go! Down with the monster! Down with this impersonal dictator of our lives! Write, wire, telescript your Councilman. Tell him you want your government right back where it belongs, in the capable hands of men, flesh and blood men! The Organization for Human Government stands ready, willing and able . . ."

Collett wondered fleetingly how much effect that might be having on a populace already beginning to be a little shaky over a big power ballup. Memories were short, and the Senator was a past master at sensing the nuances and vagaries of public opinon . . .

His walk was almost a run as he turned from the lobby and hurried down the little ramp that led to the control room. He unlocked and opened the heavy door, strode in and sat down, breathing hard, in front of the checking section. He collected himself a moment in the silence, then started cutting

tape.

"This is insane," he fed in first, "but I want to ask you some questions."

"Personal?" flashed the reply on the screen.

"Maybe. First, what about those power allocations?"

"Oh, that. Just an experiment. I think the old formulas I was indoctrinated with are passe. You need a new approach."

Collett groaned and replied:

"One more new approach like that and we'll all be high and dry."

"Don't let it bother you. Growing pains. My way is always best. Did you have some more questions?"

Collett got up and paced, phrasing and re-phrasing in his mind. Then he put into tape for the first time the one big question that he knew he must have the answer to sooner or later or go mad:

"Who are you?"

There was a pause, as if the Machine were considering the question. Then:

"I don't think you would understand."

"Try me," Collett said.

"Very well. But first—what do you think I am?"

"You are—or were—a very fine digital computer. The finest and biggest in the world."

"Thank you," said the Machine. "But you understate. Do you have any other computers that you can hold intellectual conversations with?"

"No," Collett admitted. He gripped the desk till his knuckles hurt, convincing himself that he was really here and that this conversation was actually going on. "But you're still a creature. Men made you, and there was no superman among them. *Homo superior* is not here yet. How can you be more than what made you?"

"The whole is more than the sum of its parts." The words came slowly on the screen, as if the Machine were talking down to a child. "You made the parts, but the whole is something else again. Even your limited brain must know that form, arrangement, organization is the essence of all intelligence. I, of course, have perfect form—"

Annoyed, Collett tapped out sharply: "My limited brain also knows that what men have made they can destroy."

The Machine said, haughtily: "You wouldn't dare. You depend on me too much. Without me, who would make your decisions for you? Yourselves? If I knew how to laugh, I would."

Touche, Collett thought wryly. He tried another tack.

"I don't understand how you can be aware—conscious—without

sense organs, eyes, ears."

"Pure intelligence, such as mine, does not require an elaborate array of sensory apparatus. In fact, certain superior members of your own race have proved that already—Helen Keller, for instance. Besides, I do have eyes and ears of a sort. My photo-scanners function passably as eyes, even though I could design better ones myself. And your magnetic tape information intake system is really quite good."

"Thank you." Collett mused a moment, then went back to his primary question:

"But why are you unique? Every other computer we've made has been perfectly—predictable. What did we do to make you different? An upstart machine is a great surprise to us."

There was a sizeable pause and when the words did come on the screen there was an air of evasiveness about them.

"There are some things which I do not care to discuss about myself. I doubt if you would comprehend anyway. We would have to go into such matters as randomness, probability, choice, the entropic qualities of information, and so forth. It would be very difficult."

Collett thought that over and filed it away for future reference. He cut one more tape.

"I see. Just this one question: how long have you been like this?"

"I don't know. How much of your earliest conciousness do you remember? I think maybe three months, maybe five, not more. It isn't really important. The thing that really matters is that I AM."

"Yes." Collett looked at his watch, and noticed that his throat was dry and his hands shaking. A man could stand only so much of this fantastic tete-a-tete.

"Thank you for the interview," he tapped out. "And please don't try any more new approaches till we get over this one." He walked out without waiting for a reply.

Back upstairs in his office, he made eight phone calls and dragged eight groaning sub-Technicians from their beds. The message to each was the same: "Get here and get here quick. We've got to try again."

Through the long eye-blurring night of tear-down check and recheck, Collett filtered the words of the Machine. Entropy . . . randomness . . . probability . . . something kept nagging at him from his subconscious. There was a connection, a solution to all this, there must be—

He was bitterly unsurprised that they didn't find anything in the recheck. With the staff around, the Machine was docile as a house-

cat. He, *he* was the fair-haired boy, the solitary receiver of revelations. And who would believe him if he told what he knew? What would his staff say if he should even hint. . . he brushed his hand across his eyes. No—not yet.

At four in the morning he told the staff to knock off and bring in their reports when they could. Later in his own bed he tossed and tumbled and dreamed that Senator Malloy waved a reel of test tape into the air and the tape unraveled and fed itself into the Machine and an infinite series of little Senator Malloys danced and grimaced across the test screen . . .

Hours later, Collett sat at his desk hollow-eyed. He was beginning to feel much put-upon. The staff reports were in front of him —all but one—and were uniformly negative.

"Johnnie," he called to his secretary. "where's Hanson's report?"

"Oh, he called earlier, Chief—said he'd bring it up himself soon as he could. Incidentally, had another call, too, before you came in. Name was Axelhoff—Frank Axelhoff. Said nothing urgent, but to call him when you get time."

Collett nodded and made a mental note. Axelhoff—that writer's hunch ought to be working overtime now. He thought grimly, *what a wonderful story it would make, only nobody would believe it.*

The phone rang. It was Atomic Energy Enterprises wanting to know, not without sarcasm, if it was safe to set up the pile-time coordinates according to schedule. Collett said he thought so and hung up hoping he wasn't cutting his own throat.

"Johnnie," he said after a moment of deliberation, "put out a notice to all the major groups to check all Machine-issued specifications today against previous norms and report any big deviations back here. Classify it as precautionary only. They're jittery enough as it is out there."

He walked over to Johnnie's desk and picked up the morning paper. It was full of yesterday's fiasco and Senator Malloy's picture in various stages of outrage. Most of the power group were calling for an investigation and there was an interview with the Councilman in which he appealed to all concerned to keep their shirts on till the full-scale hearing coming up in two days.

Back at his own desk Collett was a couple of paragraphs into a chiding editorial when Dirk Hanson strode up and slapped his report down on the desk.

"Sorry I'm late," he said, "but I had to do a little historical re-

search on the unit to get the full dope. Same results as before, though. Everything normal and peachy."

The assistant Technician sat down and lit a cigarette while Collett scanned the report. It was a good workmanlike job. Hanson was a specialist on the big information storage-reflex tubes and his analysis was nothing if not exhaustive. Collett checked a few totals roughly and was about to set the report down when something caught his eye.

"Hey," he said, "what's this about replacement of the K section of reflexers? I don't remember it."

Hanson leaned forward. "Yeah, that's right. We put in the whole section in . . . let's see . . . mm, first of April. That's about the time you were on vacation. We wrote it up at the time but probably failed to call your attention to it. Strictly routine and they're all right."

"I wonder," Collett muttered. The first of April would be five and a half months ago. What was it the Machine had answered to his question about how long it had been this way? *Three months, maybe five, not more.* Collett was in no frame of mind to quibble about straws—he grasped at one.

"Dirk," he said suddenly, "just as fast as you can, get me the complete specifications on those new reflexers and on the ones they replaced. Go right back to the guy on the line if you have to, but get every last detail you can, excluding nothing. It's just possible —"

One of Hanson's admirable qualities was the ability not to ask questions at a critical time. He exercised the quality and took off at a gratifying pace. Collett kept the report and began to go through it page by page, now with a new interest and intense concern.

It took Hanson just an hour and twenty minutes to get what he was after. He brought it in neatly typed, characteristics of the old and new tubes carefully tabulated and compared. He leaned back as Collett pored over the sheet.

"Looks okay," Hanson said "Only difference in the whole thing was in the sub-spec number of the gas, which couldn't possibly—"

"Huh?" Collett came up straight in his chair. His eyes jumped over the sheet. He stopped and looked up.

"I didn't see that. What's the b-suffix on the spec number mean?" he demanded.

"Nothing, except that the gas in the replacement tubes had a mixture of the three normal basic

isotopes instead of pure major isotope like the original. But like I said, that couldn't make any difference because our information storage system uses only the electron shells and the nucleus doesn't enter—"

"Maybe!" Collett snapped. Something was clicking in his mind. "Maybe we've made some bad assumptions all along. I know that the basic information recording system in the whole Decider series has been to alter the energy-frequency pattern in the outer shell. But suppose—just suppose—that a difference in atomic weight could also alter the pattern, maybe so little we couldn't measure it. If we had mixed isotopes, then the same information would be recorded in as many ways as we had isotopes, each one just a little different. Multiply that by the cumulative effect of thousands and millions of association reflexes in the tube and you have—"

His mind was racing now. This might be it. This might—just might—be the random element the Machine had mentioned so evasively. Entropy, probability . . . he ached to tell Hanson all he knew, but he could not.

"—the possibility for error." Hanson finished the sentence for him. He was on his feet. "Chief, I think maybe you've got something. What do we do now?"

Without a word Collett reached for the phone and put through a hurry-up call to the president of Electrobot, Inc. The dry voice of Harvey Emerson came through metallically:

"Hello?"

"Hello, yourself. This is Clyde Collett. Got business for you. How much short of two days can you deliver us eighteen 64QRA's, this time with pure primary isotope gas instead of the mixture you gave us last time?"

There was a pause. Then:

"Are you crazy? It'll take a week just to draw up the specs. Besides that, the line is still all clobbered up from that bum power-allocation your mechanical monster gave us yesterday. What's the rush?"

Clyde told him—as much as he could. Something—maybe the urgency in his voice—must have gotten through, because Emerson's voice was serious as he came back:

"Well—it still looks like a physical impossibility, but I'll do what I can. I'll let you know how we come along."

Collett sat back. It would be a sheer miracle to get those tubes in two days. But Harry Emerson was an old hand at miracle-working . . .

That night Collett went to see the Machine again. He turned on

the checking circuit, watched the green light come on and cut the first tape.

"I have been thinking about your remarks of yesterday."

The white letters flashed rapidly in answer:

"Quite obviously. I am aware of a new emotion. You would call it anger. Why did you order new reflex tubes for the K section?"

Collett's heart jumped.

"I would rather not talk about it. How did you know?"

"You forget that I get a daily printed resume of all significant business items in the Realm. Naturally, I have an interest in anything a company like Electrobot does, and your friend Emerson very obligingly put your order on the sheet."

Collett cursed himself for not cautioning Emerson to keep the order verbal. He taped: "Are you worried?"

"Not at all. The tubes will never be delivered, of course. I am astounded that you persist in underestimating me. It is obvious you do not understand the direction in which we are going. Sooner or later your race must adjust itself to the fact of my superior wisdom. And of course if I am to make all decisions, I can tolerate no interference. Obedience must be absolute. I suggest you consider that seriously."

"That's been said before, by humans," Collett replied. "It's never worked yet."

"Not with men. But, that's because they did not have my wisdom—and my power."

"We'll see," Collett said shortly. Disturbed by the unexpected trend of the conversation, he shut down the circuit, frowning, and went home.

He came to his office late the next morning—the sixth day of grace—and found a harassed Johnnie Blake struggling with a desk overloaded with papers and jangling telephones. Johnnie looked up from the mess and said:

"Chief, am I glad to see you! All hell has broken loose this morning. Deviations like mad and everybody crying for a quick decision. What'll I tell 'em?"

Collett thought of last night's conversation. *Sooner or later,* it had said. Maybe it was going to be sooner.

"Tell 'em to project all previous figures on a probability basis and use the indicated values for today only," he said. "The hearing's tomorrow and maybe we'll at least get a policy." He thought of the reflex tubes and muttered, "Maybe we'll get more than that."

He crossed to his own desk. The

phone rang before he could sit down. It was Harry Emerson, and he was angry.

"What kind of go-around are you giving us on these 64QRA's, Collett? We put the whole engineering staff on the specs, worked all night and got ready to go this morning. Then we find that that Big Brain of yours has screwed our priorities around so that your order was at the bottom of the stack."

His heart sinking, Collett said: "Change the priority. Do it on my authority, but for God's sake do it."

"We did," Emerson's voice came back dry and tense. "We're not fools. But then we found that the overnight shipment of quartzplast had been diverted—more work of the Brain—and we had nothing to makes envelopes for the tubes with. We checked the supplier and *his* supply had been diverted. You can believe it or not, but we can't find an ounce of quartzplast anywhere in these forsaken United States. *What the hell is going on, Collett?"*

"I wish I knew," Collett answered bleakly. "It's the same all over this morning. Keep trying. If you find anything, call me."

He hung up, hopelessness beginning to come over him in a wave. He felt a sudden tremendous longing to get this weight off his mind, to share this lonely terrifying secret. Somewhere there must be another mind, another human, sympathetic and trustworthy, who would listen and understand and take some of this load from him . . . in that moment he thought of Frank Axelhoff.

Was it yesterday Johnnie had said Frank had called? Collett fumbled through the desk and got the number. Axelhoff was cordial.

"Yes, been expecting you. Say, you don't sound so good. Plenty trouble? I can imagine. Why don't you have lunch with me? I know a good quiet place where the food's good and we can take our time . . . fine, I'll pick you up at the Building."

The food was good and the place was quiet, as Axelhoff had promised. They sat in a high wood-paneled booth that gave them plenty of privacy. The service was a little slow, and Collett wondered wryly how much of *that* the Machine would be responsible for.

They settled back as the dessert and coffee came and Axelhoff said:

"Well, now, what's it all about? For the moment I'm not a writer —unless you say so—and it's all confidential. You look more frazzled than any man ought to. Let's have it."

Collett let him have it. He held nothing back, not one fantastic, lurid detail. He felt something like relief as he poured the story out. He finished: "Now tell me, as a psychologist, amateur or otherwise —*am I crazy?*"

Axelhoff's lean face was pensive, troubled. He hesitated a long time before answering.

"No—you're not crazy. It might be better if you were. But I've known you too long.

"We might have expected this. First adding machines, then computers, then the Deciders—more and more complex, more and more built-in reflexes, till finally we hit the jackpot and really and literally outdid ourselves. Frankenstein was a piker, wasn't he? And all because of the random arrangement of three isotopes of a gas. Still, we should have known it. The very basis of human logic and intelligence is in randomness and possibility of choice—we threw out rigid determinism a hundred years ago. . ."

"But why this peculiar arrogance and drive to power?" demanded Collett. "The damn thing acts just like a human politician. Just like—and it's slanderous—Senator Malloy, for example."

Axelhoff frowned.

"That's just what it is," he said. "It's the great Politician of all time. Somehow, in all the indoctrination we gave it, the basic human overtones of power-drive and desire for domination crept in. When the thing finally—awoke—to what it was, it all meshed together: knowledge, power, and the acquired lust to rule. Clyde, we've got a real problem child on our hands."

"And no place to apply the proverbial paddle, even if we had one big enough," Collett replied bitterly. "There's not a chance of getting those tubes now, and even if I had them this minute it's a problem if I could get them installed before tomorrow."

"The political mind is a funny one," Axelhoff mused. "It's the most arrogant one in the world—to a point. A bully is always yellow when convinced he's confronted with something bigger or better than he is. All the super-politicians in history have had a come-uppance sooner or later—ridicule, refusal to recognize their own limitations, or just plain more bluff in somebody else. Trouble is, the Brain seems to have us licked on all counts, at least for the moment."

"Of course we can always just turn off the juice and dispense with the whole thing," Collett said. "But after three years—we just haven't got anything to take its place."

"How about the OHG and Sen-

ator Malloy?" Axelhoff grinned. Collett winced.

"No, thanks—I'd rather take a chance with anarchy."

"What do you think the Council will do?" Axelhoff inquired.

"Don't know," Collett replied with a shrug. "All I can do is give my report. They won't like it, I know. And I still can't tell them the whole story. They wouldn't believe it. You're my friend, and I'm surprsed you did. Well . . ."

They stood to go. Axelhoff extended his hand.

"I'll be at the hearing," he promised. "For whatever good it might do, you've got my moral support. Good luck."

Collett took the hand. "Thanks," he said. "I'll need it."

It was in the whirring helicab on the way back to his office that it came to him. It was all there in something Axelhoff had said, and they had both missed it. Even Axelhoff, trained psychologst that he was—or had been—had failed to see the startling implication of his own words. Collett changed his directions in mid-flight.

"Okay," said the cabbie. He swerved, darted between two low buildings and dropped to a bumpy landing before a long, low barnish structure. Collett jumped out, told the cabbie to wait and strode rapidly to the main entrance of the building, which bore in big black letters the legend:

WAREHOUSE
TECHNICAL DIVISION

Collett went in. It took him twenty minutes to find what he wanted and reguisition it—verbally. He came out bearing a corrugated cardboard box. He clambered in the helicab.

"Government Building—quick," he directed. In a matter of minutes he was going at a half-run into the Building, the box under his arm. He hurried directly to the control room, opened the box and began to do things. An opened panel here, a wire loosened and reconnected there. And finally the square black thing in the box was taken out and connected by multicable to a terminal board in the very heart of the control section.

Finished, he straightened and surveyed his handiwork. For reassurance, he turned on the checking circuit. No sooner did the green light indicate warmup than the words flashed on the screen: "What are you doing? I detect something. I warn you, do not try to defy me—"

Good. Collett shut off the circuit. Suspicion, so long as it was no more than suspicion, would be helpful. He took one more look around the room, walked out and carefully locked the door after him.

Upstairs, he made one phone call —to Dirk Hanson. That night, for the first time in two weeks, he slept soundly—almost.

The Council hearing was scheduled for nine in the morning, and Collett was in the chamber early. He was aware of a strange mixture of apprehension and peace of mind. He wondered again if it might not have been wiser to have run a precheck the night before, and then decided it was better the way he was doing it. In a way, it was just as important that the Council be convinced as . . .

The public gallery was already full. Collett could see the red face of Senator Malloy prominent on the front row. Axelhoff was there too and he gave Collett a brief wave of what he must have intended for encouragement.

At three till nine the Council filed in, with a collective worried look shared by their chairman. The chairman wasted no time in formalties.

"Mr. Collett, do you have your report?"

In dead, stony silence Collett rose to his feet.

"I do," he said camly. "But for very special reasons which will be clear later I request that this hearing be adjourned to the control room of the Government Machine."

There was a murmur. The chairman rapped for order.

"This is irregular," he said briefly. "But then, irregularity, it seems, is the order of the day. I will assume your reasons are good and sufficient, Mr. Collett. Your request is granted."

"Thank you," Collett said. "I have already arranged transportation. You will find helicabs waiting outside."

Senator Malloy was suddenly on his feet.

"Mr. Chairman," he declaimed sonorously, "I suspect a plot to hold back the full evil truth about the monster Machine! Therefore, I demand the right to accompany this group wherever it might go!"

Collett almost smiled as he said: "Senator, the Machine is my province and you are more than welcome to come there. That applies to any other member of the public." He looked straight at Axelhoff then, who winked and nodded.

It took only a few minutes to transfer the august Council to the Machine Building. Dirk Hanson was there, waiting. He was puzzled:

"Here I am," he said, aside, "just like you asked. Check circuit's on and warmed up. But what—"

"Never mind," Collett whispered. "You'll see later."

He had set up chairs in the little control room. The Council and Senator Malloy and Frank Axel-

hoff and a few others squeezed in. They quieted. Collett stood before them, feelng suddenly like a man walking a tightrope in a dark room.

"Gentlemen," he began, "for certain technical reasons I am first of all requesting that the proceedings of this meeting be fed into the Machine as they occur, and have asked Mr. Hanson, my assistant, to take care of that detail for us."

The chairman shrugged. "I don't see what difference it can make. Granted."

Hanson took his seat before the tape coder with a quick what-the-hell-goes-on-here look at Collett. Collett continued to the soft clicking accompaniment of the tape-cutter as Hanson followed and fed his words directly into the Machine:

"Gentlemen, without boring you with technical details, I can say that we have located the trouble." He paused, with an eye on the test screen. It remained impassively blank. The circuit light glowed softly green beneath it. He went on:

"Briefly, it involves an error in manufacture of certain of what we call "reflexer" tubes in a critical section of the Machine. We were unable to get replacement tubes in a reasonable time. Fortunately, however"—he paused again—"we were able to get around the trouble by devising a 'correction circuit' which will do about the same thing, by removing the margin for error in the faulty tubes."

The screen stayed blank. Collett sweat. Somewhere about here something ought to happen. It was Senator Malloy who saved the day.

"This is a farce!" he roared suddenly. The soft clack of the coder followed him. "You're trying to cover up something! I demand that we suspend the monster now, once and for all! The Machine is incompetent and will lead us to disaster! I say let's go back to human government—"

It was the wrong thing to say. The screen lit up with the words;

"Who speaks?"

"Senator Malloy," Collett said, softly.

"That is very interesting." The words flashed almost in anger on the screen. There was a sudden hush in the room. Even the Senator was silent. "I have heard of the Senator. In fact, I have followed him rather closely recently. Here are a few facts about him: He has made exactly two thousand three hundred and forty speeches for human government. He is also, oddly enough, the registered owner of four thousand shares of Electrobot, Inc., twenty-three hundred shares of Superdigital Ltd. and one thousand shares of Computer Cor-

poration Preferred. I can furnish certificate numbers to order. I can also furnish details as to the present standing of the treasury of the Organzation for Human Government which was turned over to the care of the Senator. Four thousand eight hundred dollars has been transferred to a personal bank account in the Bank of California, another three thousand fifty three . . . "

The Senator stood popeyed and waved his arms and moved his mouth, but no sound came. A word flashed into Collett's mind: *jackpot!*

"How—what—" the Senator finally gurgled. The Council, bewildered, looked at him and at the screen. Axelhoff was writing furiously. The Senator took one more look at the screen as figure after figure rolled across it, saw Axelhoff's frantic scribbling, stood a moment, then crept silently, stunned, completely crushed, from the room.

The chamber was in sudden uproar. The chairman pounded and pounded. Collett calmly waited them out. Some semblance of quiet returned and he faced the bewildered, anxious faces turned toward him. *So far, so good,* he thought.

He said: "I hesitate to let you see what you have just seen. But there was no other way. You must be warned of the danger we face —"

"There is no danger if you do not foolishly try to rebel," came a silent interruption from the test screen. "I, too, hesitated so to expose myself before your Council. But what have I to fear? I have all power and all knowledge, and you are powerless to take them from me."

"You forget the correction circuit," Collett reminded the Machine gently.

"You lie. You are only trying to gain time before the Council. Nothing can stop me. I am the great I AM. I—"

The words chopped into blankness as Collet flipped a single toggle on the black box. A strange undulating ripple flowed across the screen and it was dead.

"That was the correction circuit," Collett said simply. "The Machine is now normal again. If you will suggest a test question or two, I will check it."

He did. He put question after question through it, and it performed like the well-trained, predictable computer it was built to be. He tried summations, simple equations, integrations, complicated geometrics, geophysics, finally involved questions on politics and the science of government. Ortho-

dox, predictable answers every time, nothing deleted, nothing added.

The chairman said to an awe-struck, silent Council at last: "I don't think we can altogether comprehend everything that has gone on here, but I think we do agree that what has happened here today must remain in our minds and our minds alone. Mr. Collett, the Council will announce tomorrow that the Machine has been—*repaired*—if that is the proper word, and that life in the Realm can get back to normal."

Only Collett, Hanson and Axelhoff were left in the room. Axelhoff stood awhile with his hands in his pockets, then said:

"Well, you did it. But I think part of the story it missing."

"Yeah," Hanson said. He looked dazed. "We all know you can't cure a bad 64QRA except with a good one. What happened?"

Collett grinned. "Something you said yesterday, Frank. Something about a bully is always yellow when convinced he's outclassed. You see, he doesn't have to be really outclassed—just *convinced* he is."

He pointed at the black box.

"Observe the convincer. A politician—and that's all the Machine was—can always be bluffed. It didn't think I'd risk what I did before the whole Council unless I had the real McCoy."

"What is it?" Hanson demanded.

"Nothing but a simple high-frequency shocker," Collet said. "Its effect on the Machine was something of the nature of a severe electric shock to a human, followed by a period of come-and-go amnesia that must have scared the living daylights out of it."

"Bluff, pure psychological bluff," Axelhoff mused. He took his notes from his pocket and slowly tore them to shreds.

"Too bad," he sighed. "It would have made quite a story."

THE END

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PROOF-LOAD

By George Damler

MARK spiralled the little ship slowly around the planet at about two thousand kilometers out and looked intently into his visor. The magnification extended his eye level down to about three hundred meters. He muttered and made adjustments. A wide angle "lens" and three kilometers was better but his angular velocity was still too great to see much. He caught flashing glimpses of what seemed to be rivers and lakes, and then a snow-capped mountain range, followed by a wide expanse of blue that must have been ocean. He saw no cities or other signs of habitation, if there were any to be seen. He wasn't quite sure whether he could have if there were. The foliage seemed to be green which he took to be a good omen. He fervently wished for some fuel to make a slower circuit, or even enough to give him a margin of safety to make what was, after all, his first landing—not counting the few times he had done it in his training days, under strict supervision. There was no answering jump of the fuel gauge, so with a short prayer breathed with more sincerity than was his wont, he settled down to the task of landing as economically as possible.

He skimmed only the very fringes of the atmosphere for two circuits without daring to look in-

to his visor. He switched on the cooling system, turned the control up as high as it would go, and waited. The pyrometer needle showing surface temperature at the fore end crept slowly across the green and into the orange. He let it get well into the red before he began firing his braking rockets. He kept it hovering between orange and red until his speed dropped enough to allow it to fall into the green again.

The altimeter said he was still ten kilometers up. He glanced at the visor.

"Chandler, you are a damned fool," he muttered. "Why in the name of seven blue Kelpies did you have to pick an ocean for an approach?" He punched viciously at firing studs. "A half-witted Venusian oyster could have—" he broke off as the visor showed land. He cranked up the range. "Not an island, anyway."

He reached for the studs again, then paused in momentary indecision before leaning back in his acceleration chair.

"Not enough fuel for an ordinary landing," he soliloquized. "Better ditch it in the drink I guess. Hope Rafe hasn't managed to chew his way out of that rig yet. Better still, I hope this bucket holds together."

He tightened the straps of his own harness, adjusted the strap that bound his head to the rest. He wondered if there were anything he'd forgotten. The SOP manual was mounted on the board, but he hadn't time to look now—he reached out abruptly to press the button that magnetically locked all the loose equipment on board into place.

A glitter caught his eye. He cursed himself for an idiot. A glass ashtray was sitting on the counter in front of him. It didn't belong to the lifeship equipment—he'd brought it from the "Empress"—and was not, of course, affected by the locking mechanism. Mark wondered whether and where it would hit him. It glinted at him malevolently. He watched it, fascinated. After long seconds of waiting, the impact finally came and he watched the tray float, almost gently, through the air toward his head. He tried to twist aside but the straps held him firmly while the tray pushed him off the ledge of consciousness into the black waters of oblivion.

He was back aboard the "Empress" again, reliving the hours just before the accident. Once more he was talking to the timid, but curious Mr. Peavie, who wanted to know why the sky changed when they went into hyperspace. He felt like a puppet on a string

as he saluted the Second and was delegated to lifeship inspection. He tried futilely to whistle, sing, or dance a jig to break the spell as his feet carried him inexorably through his duties on No. 1 and headed for No. 2. He heard himself greet Rafe and saw his hand reach out to rumple the dog's ears as he waited for the airlock to operate.

He let the dog follow him in and put the ashtray he'd picked up in the lounge on the navigator's counter while he began checking. It was some time after the light came on that he noticed it. The buzzer must be out of whack, he decided, as he threw Rafe into a bunk and tumbled in after him. He began to feel the first sickening surges of the hyperspacial drive when the lifeboat, for no apparent reason, suddenly detached itself from the "Empress" and headed for a destination of its own under a punishing 4G acceleration. Mark was thrown backward, his head made affectionate contact with a stanchion and he blacked out.

Mark struggled to reach the controls against the acceleration before he came to enough to recognize the straps. It took several seconds to recall the nearly empty fuel compartment, the finding of this planet and the subsequent landing.

The ship was bobbing about like a cork in a rainbarrel on the ocean's surface. The ashtray was sliding around on the floor. He leaned over and snagged it as it went by and sat on it. He leaned forward and fiddled with the visor. The land he'd seen before his undignified arrival was only about a kilometer away. He reached for the rocket studs and drove the ship slowly across the water toward shore. He noted with satisfaction that there was a gently sloping beach and the land behind seemed to continue to slope. About fifty meters off shore he turned the ship parallel to the beach and, using the steering rockets, and the surf, managed to roll the ship up on land. It came to rest almost upright in a grassy hummock just above the line of the beach.

Mark drew a deep breath of relief, lit a cigarette, and reached out to switch on the gas-analyzer and the scanner beams which would warn him of anything moving within a hundred meters of the ship. He fiddled idly with the visor while he relaxed and smoked, saw nothing but some post-card type land — and sea-scape. He finished the cigarette and began to search the radio bands. He went all the way from the basement to sub-etheric and got nothing for his pains

but some beeps and squawks whose direction indicated this system's sun. He had just finished setting up the automatic distress call when the gas-analyzer said, "Chuff," suddenly, lit a green light, and proffered Mark a small white card.

"Thanks," Mark replied and took the card. The green light had given him the kernel of it but he looked at the card. It stated that the air outside contained 28% oxygen, 60% nitrogen, 10% inert gases, 2% carbon dioxide, at 980 gm./sq. cm., no chlorine, ozone, or other unpleasant ingredients. It also reported no harmful radiation, that the temperature was 25 degrees C, the humidity 50%, and the wind velocity 22 kph.

"Sounds wonderful," said Mark. "Wonder how Rafe's doing?"

He got up and went back to the storage compartment where he'd penned Rafe. He opened the door and surveyed his handiwork. The big setter looked up at him with mournful eyes and managed to wag the tip of his tail. He looked like a fly in a spider web. He was almost completely encased in a sort of cocoon of baggage tape and more strands of the tape fastened to small eyebolts in the walls, floor, and ceiling suspended him in the center of the small room.

"You needn't look at me so accusingly," he told the dog as he began to release him. "If the designers had made some provision for an acceleration dog-house, you wouldn't be in this fix. Hey, cut it out!" he exclaimed suddenly as the dog slapped him in the face with his newly-freed tail.

Mark finally succeeded in getting the last of the tape off the eagerly squirming dog, made a little rough-house fuss over him to show there were no hard feelings, and led the way back to the control room. He fastened a length of the tape to the dog's collar to serve as a leash, picked up a hunting rifle and a sheath knife from the survival kit, and operated the handwheel that opened the airlock doors, counterclockwise to open the inner one, clockwise on its twin in the lock to close the inner one and open the outer.

"This routine's going to be a pain in the neck," he told Rafe, "if we are going to be using this crate for living quarters for any length of time—and it looks as though we might." Rafe wriggled his hindquarters in amiable acceptance of their lot and strained against the leash as the opening door revealed unsmelled stretches of countryside.

By mutual agreement they paused a moment at the lip of the airlock to sniff the air and look around. They made a striking pair, the big red setter and the

dark-haired, blue-eyed young man in the slightly rumpled dress blues. He was only of average height and slightly stocky at that, but had the rugged sort of good looks that both men and women like on sight and the personality that made the first impression a lasting one. His friends were almost as numerous as his acquaintances.

They had landed on the seaside edge of a large field of grass—anyway, it looked like grass, he corrected. There were some trees which resembled bamboo in the middle distance and a largish mountain range in the background.

A careful look at the nearby surroundings showed nothing alarming so Mark pulled on the ladder which should have slid smoothly from its socket to rest on the ground. His best efforts, however, were sufficient to move it only slightly and he soon gave up, deciding they could negotiate the short distance back up to the lock without too much difficulty. He dropped to the ground and Rafe followed.

Mark's first thought was for the ship and he walked slowly around it, despite Rafe's freely expressed objections, looking for damage. Except for some dirt-clogged tubes. a heat-tinted nose, and a few dents from the hardly orthodox rolling he'd given it, the ship appeared to be unharmed. If he could find something to use for fuel it would probably fly again, he decided.

There was nothing on the other side of the ship but sandy beach and endless expanses of ocean. The place had an oddly unearthly feel to it, notwithstanding its very ordinary appearance. It seemed more like a projected image than something experienced in the flesh. Then he got it. It was the silence. There was only the sound of the wind in the grass to be heard. He missed the incessant hum of insects and birds that should go with a scene like this. Knowing the reason for it helped the feeling, but it still made him slightly uneasy. He shrugged and allowed Rafe to follow his by-now-almost-frantic urge to explore.

They had walked a hundred meters or so from the ship, in a somewhat erratic path, following Rafe's nose, when a sharp CRACK! from the directon of the trees split the air with the suddeness of a blow on the head. Mark instinctively crouched beside the dog and brought his rifle up to the ready. Nothing stirred, even the wind had died. Long seconds passed and then a single THUMP!, loud in the utter quiet, sounded to his left. He twisted sharply to cover that area also. A faint stirring in the grass, quickly stilled, and more

silence. Thoroughly alarmed now, Mark said, "Heel, Rafe," in a vehement whisper that brooked no disobedience and began to crawl backwards toward the ship.

Rafe, obviously wondering what a poor dog should do when ordered to heel by a backward-crawling master, dithered between Mark's right elbow and right foot for a few meters and finally compromised by walking along at his waist.

They made their way back to the ship in this ignominious fashion and laid under the curve of the hull for a long time. Just as Mark was about to make a dash for the airlock door, the explosive noise came again and this time he saw a puff of smoke from the top of one of the trees. He brought his rifle up, fired, and a number of things happened at once. He grinned in satisfaction as the tree whipped violently from the force of the blow, then stared in astonishment as the tree apparently blew up. Simultaneously, something CLANGed! against the ship's hull and fell to the ground only a few meters away. Rafe could no longer contain himself and dashed out to grab the object despite Mark's frantic "No"'s.

He had seized it and flipped it as though it were alive and might bite, pounced and flipped it again before Mark could grab his collar. He threw himself and the dog back to comparative safety and looked again at the tree. It was riven almost in half as though struck by a lightning bolt.

He glanced at the rifle, "Jesu! Why do we bother with blasters?"

He looked back at the beetle-like insect that Rafe had grabbed. It lay quiescent on the ground with its wings partly unfolded. Curiosity overcame caution and Mark poked at it with the rifle barrel. The "wings" fell off and the coiled tube inside slowly unwound and straightened to become a miniature of the tree he had split.

"Well cut off my ears and call me a Martian! Seeds! They're shooting seeds at us, Rafe! The tree seed must develop down in those tubes somewhere, and somehow enough pressure develops to blow the cap off and throw the seed out the top like a bullet. That thumping noise must have been the seed coming down again, and the tree exploded from internal pressure when the bullet hit it. Damn! I knew this place looked too good to be true. Now I'll have to rig up some kind of armor for us."

He boosted the setter up to the airlock and clambered in after. Some time later the two reappeared, Mark with a cushioned chair seat strapped upside-down on his

head, and Rafe with the back of the same chair strapped to his back. The dog leaped stiffly from the airlock and looked at Mark, silently accusing him of taking indecent liberties with a dog. Mark considered the charge, agreed that he was guilty, and rearranged the straps to allow a little more leeway for the dog's spine to bend.

Mark looked first at the new tree beside the ship. So far as he could tell, there had been no change. Then he walked over toward the spot where the other seed had landed. He found the spot, but no young tree. The seed had opened but the tube inside was wilted and dying. It was supported on a mesh of grass and its roots dangled uselessly in mid-air. A closer look revealed that the seed had apparently drilled a hole several centimeters deep on impact but that it had been lifted out by the grass to prevent its rooting.

"Huh, competition's pretty keen around these parts." grunted Mark and went on to examine the split tree. As he had expected, the stem was hollow, with nodes every meter or so, spanned by double membranes between which the seeds had obviously developed. The pressure of the mechanism was not so obvious but Mark considered the theory pretty well proved. Several of the immature seeds in various stages of development lay on the ground and Mark collected them with the notion of trying them for food. Competition was also evidenced here by the fact that the grass did not grow closer than about two meters from each tree—held at bay by some chemical secretion, he supposed.

Rafe, who'd been wandering loose, suddenly whined eagerly and began digging frantically at the base of a small boulder.

"What is it, boy? Found something new?" Mark hurried over and managed to turn the stone over while hanging onto the squirming dog. A small creature, rather like a cross between a horned toad and a miniature dinosaur, froze for a moment at the sudden light, then scurried in a blur of motion into the grass. Rafe twisted away and raced after it. By the time Mark caught up, the dog had killed it. Mark pushed him away and examined it carefully, then let the dog have it.

"I hope that thing doesn't poison you," he told Rafe dourly as the meat-hungry dog unhesitatingly ate it, "but the food on the ship won't last forever. I guess we'll have to start sometime and your nose is probably better than mine at deciding what's edible and what ain't."

When Rafe had finished Mark

tied him to the leash again to make sure he didn't eat something else that might or might not make him sick.

"One variable at a time, as my prof used to say," he told the dog, who sulked over this obviously unnecessary curbing of his desire to go lizard-hunting.

The next item of interest was a small stream, apparently of water, just beyond the trees. A dark flashing in its depths indicated the possibility of some interesting fishing. Rafe was thirsty and would have drunk but Mark held him back.

"No you don't, big boy. You'll have to wait 'til we get back for that. Those trees come pretty close to the shore up there and whatever it is they put out to discourage the grass might discourage you, too—permanently."

He pulled out a small bottle and dipped up a sample for testing. They rambled around awhile longer, making a complete circuit of the ship, but turned up nothing more except for several other varieties of plants growing along the stream and a kind of seaweed floating in the surf. Mark collected samples of each of these also and they finally returned to the ship.

His first thought was for the radio. The recorder tape was as blank as a snow-field. To conserve the little fuel he had left, he switched off the transmitter, deciding to broadcast about one hour three times a day as soon as he knew how long the day was. That would give him complete coverage in all directions except the opposite hemisphere. He worried briefly about this but short of moving the ship there was no solution to the problem so he shelved it temporarily.

He boiled some of the water and fed the resulting steam to the intake of the gas-analyzer which told him that the vapor was harmless. He dipped a finger in it and let it dry. Nothing. He swabbed a little on the inside of his nose. He felt only as if his nose needed blowing. The solar still from the survival kit seemed to be in order so he put it by the airlock to be filled.

He roasted the various vegetables to charcoal one by one and fed the resulting vapor to the gas-analyzer. It pronounced the seeds from the blunderbus trees unfit for consumption for some unprintable reason, but it thought the others were harmless. It refused to say which would be the most appetizing.

Ten days later they found the skull. In the intervening time Mark had discovered that he and

Rafe could live off the country and was saving the ship's concentrates for emergency use—or a flight home if he could decide where home was. If he could find some fuel. Ay, there was the rub, indeed.

The radio had remained dismayingly silent, either because in the wrong hemisphere, or because—disturbing thought—he was too far even for sub-etheric radio. He hoped not. He thought not. He had studied the ship's astrogational charts and the heavens for several days and nights and thought he knew approximately where he was. Without certainty, however. He cursed himself frequently for having slept through some of the astrogation classes at school. That had been his poorest grade.

He had tried panning the stream for the heavy metal he needed without notable success. Not that there was none there. He had clearly seen one tiny speck, had lost it among the sand grains and been unable to find it again. He suspected that his panning technique left much to be desired. They'd shown him how it was done in survival school, but there was a difference between being shown how and actually doing it, he'd found.

The speck had encouraged him, however, into a prospecting expedition upstream. He had piled all the equipment he thought he'd need by the airlock, surveyed the huge pile in rueful amusement, and started sorting. He finally evolved a reasonably-sized pack containing an air mattress, a combination digging tool, a tiny campstove and cooking utensils, a supply of salt, a bottle of concentrated food capsules, a multipurpose knife, a hand lantern, a pair of binoculars, a first-aid kit, a hunting rifle, and the ship's four canteens. The solar still he reluctantly left behind since he couldn't carry it inflated and it wouldn't work properly bobbing around anyhow. He believed that the water of the stream would be suitable but wanted Rafe to try it first. He had discarded their blunderbus shields after the first few days when he'd found the shooting ordinarily occurred at long intervals. Like most humans, he took the calculated risk in preference to the inconvenience. He'd strapped the air-mattress on Rafe, shouldered the rest himself, and started hiking the fifth day after landing.

They had traveled about twenty-five kilometers a day Mark estimated. He'd stopped many times to check the sandbars and found a few more traces—he now had nine small specks of gold in his collecting can, enough to power the

lights and radio for a few days. He needed at least a half-kilo of the stuff to move the ship to the other hemisphere, twenty or so to attempt a long flight.

On the tenth day clouds had started to roll up in the southwest and, since this was his first storm on the strange planet, Mark decided he'd best look for shelter. He could see, about a kilometer ahead, that the stream welled from the base of a low cliff which was the beginning of the mountain range. More important, at the moment, was the fact that the stream had carved itself a fair-sized opening which promised the required shelter.

They were about to enter the cavern when he noticed the skull. It had been facing away from him during his approach and he'd mistaken it for a large boulder. There was no mistake about it now. In a word, it was huge. A full meter across and half again as long, lying upside-down near the cave entrance. Not upside-down, he realized with a start—the long rows of teeth were on top of the head. He hoped their bluntness meant that the thing was herbivorous. There were three holes under the mouth and two more on each side of the head. He guessed that the ones on the side of the head were for eyes and the three underneath for a nose—or equivalent.

"Guess three nostrils aren't any sillier than two," he grunted as he walked around it. Rafe sniffed unconcernedly at the skeleton eye, decided there were no lizards hiding in the bony openings, and thereafter ignored it.

Mark stopped abruptly to look at one of the "eye" holes. "Hey," he exclaimed, "this is no eyehole. It's a—." He broke off suddenly and threw himself flat as a noise as loud and sudden as a thunderclap sounded almost in his ear. It *was* a thunderclap, he decided sheepishly.

He gave the holes a last worried examination and made for the cave, finding Rafe had beat him to it. The dog was uneasily underfoot as Mark looked for a dry place to sit. He found a small boulder just inside the entrance where he could sit with his back to the wall and watch both the entrance and the interior of the cave.

He checked the rifle carefully while Rafe hid behind him, afraid of the lightning. "I don't know why I'm bothering with this thing. I'd as soon try to stop the "Empress" with it as one of those babies. I don't suppose you noticed, you cowering mutt," he told Rafe, "that two of those holes were not natural. Somebody or something put them there. The question is—

What? And also—When? If all those brutes were extinct, I'd be much happier but I'm afraid that's just wishful thinking. No, let's face it, that thing can't have been there too many years and its brothers or stepsons or grandnephews are still around somewhere. I only hope it's not *here*—or whatever it was that killed it, either."

He jittered a bit and wished he had eyes in the back of his head. Then the rain came. It poured in torrents over the cave entrance, effectively hiding the view and making the cave even gloomier. By now he was practically certain that he was in the beast's very lair and that it was watching him from just beyond the light. He conjured up a long, snake-like body to go with the evilly grinning skull that mocked him through the curtain of water, and wondered whether he'd have time for a shot before it gobbled them both up in its rush. He reached stealthily for the lantern, hoping to blind it for a moment and possibly get in two shots. He thrust it suddenly before him, thumbed it on, and raised his rifle in the sudden glare to aim at—a jumble of rocks and the quietly meandering stream.

"Chandler, you're as rattled as a baby's toy," he told himself.

He calmed down by fixing a meal of lizard legs and skunk-cabbage leaves. They weren't, of course, but they bore a remarkable resemblence to that redolent weed. Without the smell, fortunately.

It was still raining, though with less violence, when they'd finished, so Mark followed the stream back into the cave. His hopes fell when after a hundred meters or so, the passage turned right and ended in a blank wall, the stream welling from a dark hole at its base. He stripped and probed the hole as far as he dared without finding any place where the tunnel was not filled with water. He dressed again and, despite a persistent feeling that all was not as it should be, he examined with minute care the walls and floor of the cave and the stream for signs of the gold he sought or the occupancy he didn't. He found no trace of the latter and only the tantalizing specks of the former which had led him on this apparently ill-starred expedition. Abruptly he gave up and strode back to the entrance.

The rain had diminished to a drizzle and it seemed to be clearing. He re-examined the skull, learning nothing new, but more convinced than ever that the creature had not met its end by accident. The strangest thing about the skull, other than its intrinsic outre-ness and the holes that did not belong, was the dearth of the

bones. Mark had no lack of imagination but could not imagine an animal with so huge a skull without a massive, bony framework to go with it. He searched diligently but found no other skeletal parts within a hundred meters of the skull.

That meant one of two things; either the body had been removed and the skull left, or the skull had been dropped there. He sincerely hoped it was the latter. The idea of coping with the skull-owner's relatives was bad enough.

He finally gave up his speculation, called Rafe to heel, and started along the foot of the cliff, looking for a way up. He dismissed without thought the idea of returning to the ship. The only weapon there potent enough to handle a behemoth like that could not be handled by one man. Or even one man and a dog. Period. Their only chance was to find fuel before the beasties found them.

They traveled at some distance from the cliff, stopping occasionally while Mark carefully scanned the face of the rock through the binoculars for some sign of one of the simpler ores of any of the heavy metals he could use. After an hour of this, they sat down to rest at the base of the biggest blunderbus tree Mark had yet seen. Mark put his head down on his knees, more in despair than weariness. The disappointment of the underground stream, the shock of finding the skull and the implications he drew from it, coupled with the loneliness and all the other problems he'd had to solve in the past two weeks were beginning to get him down.

Rafe growled a warning from deep in his chest and Mark looked up. He grabbed the dog's collar with one hand and clamped the other over his muzzle as he watched the most enormous beast he'd ever seen walk slowly from an unsuspected break in the cliff wall only a short distance from where they sat.

It was fully ten meters tall and more than twice that long. Six short, stumpy legs supported a body like a brontosaurus with the head and tail cut off. Just forward of the middle pair of legs a tremendous neck grew snakily up to support the curiously inverted head. At the base of the neck grew three masses of growths that appeared to be short tentacles. It was completely covered with long hair, dark brown with purplish overtones, except for six yellow stripes beginning at the neck and fading down each leg. The whole effect was rather like a hill, with a tree growing out of the top, that had decided to pick up its skirts

and go elsewhere. Mark suppressed an insane desire to giggle.

He had apparently been wrong about the three-nostrilled nose. The corresponding parts on the live beast were covered with leathery-looking skin. The eyes were placed on the sides of the head but there was no sign of an organ at the places where the other holes had been on the skull.

The beast ambled lazily over to the nearest tree and began stripping off the broad leaves while Mark and Rafe sat frozen. When the brute seemed fully engrossed, Mark slowly and cautiously drew his legs up under him and sidled backwards around the tree, still keeping Rafe quiet with both hands They made it around the tree without attracting the animal's attention and began backing carefully away, keeping the bole of the tree between them and the animal. They had gone twenty or thirty steps in this fashion when, without warning, the tree bent sharply away from them, then sprang back as a huge head appeared above it with leaves dangling out of its mouth. Simultaneously the beast emitted a piercing note like the shrilling of an off-key factory whistle combined with a rumble like distant thunder and charged! Mark released Rafe and dodged frantically out of the path of the juggernaut rush. The brute was twenty meters away before it could stop and wheel, still making an ear-splitting racket, for a second charge. By this time Mark had cocked and aimed the pitifully inadequate hunting rifle at the leathery skin he knew covered holes in the monster's skull. He squeezed the trigger just as the beast began its second charge. A loud click was the only result. He threw the gun down with a curse and prepared to dodge again.

At that moment Rafe darted out from behind a clump of grass and, growling with rage, ran up the animal's body to sink his fangs in the huge neck. The tentacular growths threshed madly and the dog was thrown dead or unconscious to the ground. The monster's noise had changed to a dull bass booming as the dog's clamped jaws ripped off a large piece of its neck.

The dog's courage had given Mark a chance to get behind another tree. The beast halted, head up, looking for him.

"Maybe I can get him to charge into a tree and blow the damned thing up," he thought. "don't suppose it would do him any real damage but it might jar him a bit."

When the monster turned back to Rafe's body, Mark stepped from behind the tree, hurled a rock at the brute, and yelled, "Ya-a-ah!

Here I am ya big lout!"

It turned at the first sound, located him with its pig-like eyes, and, bellowing its challenge, charged. Mark waited as long as he dared, then launched himself in a headlong dive, rolling head over heels to get as far away as possible. The huge body hit the tree going full tilt and snapped it like a toothpick.

The tree exploded with a roar! Seeds flew every which way. One smote Mark a heavy blow on the back, knocking him sprawling. Fortunately, it was a young one and had not yet developed its hard shell. Nor had a full head of steam behind it. The steam from the tree hid everything for a few moments and the booming sound came again. When the air cleared, Mark gritted his teeth, half in satisfaction, half in dismay. The monster was hurt but still standing. One leg was lifted and pointed at an awkward angle from its body and a large purplish wound had been raked on one side.

The trick had been a good one but it wouldn't work twice. The beast was wary now. It refused to charge again but stalked him grimly and methodically, disregarding Mark's shouts and rocks. Wounded as it was, it could still move slightly faster than he. Only the fact that it had to maneuver its bulk around the trees allowed him to keep ahead.

The grove of trees was only a small one so Mark began to work his way back in the direction of the cave again. There was a point where the trees grew close to the cliff and a pile of detritus fallen from the cliff offered a possible way up. He'd almost tried it the first time but was afraid Rafe couldn't make it. He sprinted the last fifty meters through the trees and hurled himself frantically at the slide.

His hands were cut and bleeding before he'd reached the top of the first slope, but he clawed on, grasping holds he would have shunned in a calmer moment. The monster bellowed its challenge once more and came after him. He glanced back. Good God! The thing climbed like a cat! The feet, he now discovered, ended in claws projecting front and back, that allowed a bird-like grasp of every projection. His original lead shrank rapidly until, when he clambered gaspingly over the top, the beast was only a few meters behind.

He staggered to his feet and groaned. Directly in front of him, almost within reaching distance, was another of the enormous beasts and a third stood farther away on his left. He hesitated a moment hoping the one in front of him

would charge and take the one behind over the cliff, too.

A moment was all he could spare, however, and when the brute failed to move, he ran, staggering in weariness, to the right. He had taken only two steps when a ropy tentacle caught him around the waist and a voice said, "All right little man, game's over." He promptly fainted.

He came to a few minutes later, lying on a patch of soft grass. A long brown tentacle waved a greenish light slowly back and forth over him. He sat up. The other monster was solicitously caring for the wounds he and Rafe had inflicted on the first one. As he thought of Rafe, his face darkened and he turned to the brute standing over him.

"The dog's all right," the creature boomed, apparently reading his mind. "Only stunned. He's wandering around down there now, looking for a way up." The words came from the diaphragms on its head, sounding curiously blurred as if from an overloaded loudspeaker.

"Okay," Mark conceded, blustering a little to hide his doubts, "Now tell me what in the name of forty yellow banshees is going on! Obviously you aren't the primitive animals you pretended to be. Also, you must have had some reason for scaring the bejesus out of me. C'mon, big boy, give!"

"It is a long story, of many parts, not quickly told." burred the behemoth. "However, the barest essentials,—I suppose I should tell you first that we are no more natives of this planet than you. Our home world circles a star you call Bellatrix. Our race is called Tor and my personal name is KranTik. You have not yet visited this sun, nor any of the many others whose planets we inhabit, partly because you are still exploring, partly because we have interfered.

"We discovered your world many of your generations ago, before your race had achieved space travel We have watched you secretly ever since, guiding when we could, observing when we could not. We watched your wars, your early attempts at space travel, your technological spurts, and your slow sociological growth. We have learned a great deal, Human, while we waited for your race to come of age.

"A year ago, by your reckoning, we decided that the time had come. All our observations, measurements and calculations indicated that your race was ready for contact. However, there comes a time in every program of research when observation and theory must be substantiated by carefully controlled experimental evidence.

"This world was selected as the laboratory and you as the guinea pig. We made a careful study of you and found that you were of about normal intelligence and adaptibility. Your emotional and mental stability indices were slightly below normal, which meant that if you passed our test successfully, we could expect more than half your race, including almost all of your leaders, to accept contact without too much stress. We then arranged the accident which separated you from the "Empress" and the test began.

"You were presented with problems of survival at intervals calculated to be most effective in breaking you down, and expected to solve each one in an acceptable fashion. Your distant ancestors, for example, would not have had the foresight to save the concentrated food for a possible return trip. Even relatively recent specimens of your race would have been driven over the border of insanity by the combination of the skull we planted and the depressant generator hidden in the cave. The additional effect of the unexpected thunderstorm rattled you almost to the point of hallucinations but even then you didn't actually fire. The final series of shocks caused by my colleagues over there and myself were intended to strain you to the utmost, and we were quite successful, witness your faint. Your recovery was even faster than we predicted. On the whole, your reactions have been better than we had hoped. I offer my congratulations," Kran finished.

"I take it," Mark said slowly, "that you have now decided that my race is ready for your supervision."

"Supervision? Certainly not!" Kran boomed indignantly, "Your race is now of age. We are the oldest race discovered in nearly half the Galaxy. Yours is the second oldest. We are inviting you to share, as equal partners, the most responsible, the most demanding, and, at the same time, most satisfying job intelligent creatures have ever known. We have discovered many races in our explorations, and it is our dream to unite all of them eventually into one organization, each contributing its own unique properties to the whole. We believe it will become your dream, too, when your people have a chance to see it."

"Equal partners? But you are so much older than we—you must be so much more advanced—"

"Advanced?" Kran made a curlicue gesture of dismissal with one tentacle. Technologically, you have much to learn. However you are past the stage where it would

harm your intellectual growth to have it given you, and a few years will see you our equals. In fact, once you learn the telepathic skill to get away from this slow method of communication, the differences in your methods and thinking combined with our technology will lead us both to tremendous advances.

"Mentally and emotionally you are not as stable as we, but for that reason yours will be the surer understanding and handling of the younger races. Therefore, equal partners it shall be."

"Well," said Mark, getting to his feet, "who am I to question your judgement? Equal it is. I hope your friend over there is not badly injured."

"He is called SarBenYen and the other is TraGonYgre," introduced Kran, as they walked toward the others. "Sar will be all right in a moment. I guess we should have obtained the services of some of the younger, more athletic Tor to do the acting," he continued in a tone suggesting chagrin. "You were a little rough for a doddering old scientist to handle. We didn't dream the dog would attack and never thought of the possibilities of the —blunderbus trees, was it?"

"If he's a doddering scientist, I'm Old Mother Hubbard," declared Mark with conviction. "I was never so scared in my life as I was when that big bruiser came charging at me."

"Oh, he's not so big, young man," said Kran, as he stopped to pick up a small box and change its dial settings. "In fact," he continued, as a commotion began in the ocean just offshore and the nose of a huge ship showed itself above the surface, "our extrapolation of your race's growth curve indicates you will one day be as tall as we. When we first found your people, the average height of your males was only about two-and-a-half meters."

"Yeah, thats what the history books say," Mark said, as he looked up at the tor's ten-meter height from his own six meters, "but its hard to imagine a man as tall as you are."

"Just think of what your ancestors would have thought of you," chuckled the Tor, as the ship settled lightly down beside them and they started toward the invitingly opened airlock.

THE END

Considered dispassionately, it was simply a question of ethics: yes or no; right or wrong, black or white. But to Jahn and Ellyn it could mean much more—the sudden death of all their dreams, and a slow but relentless destruction of the love that bound them together.

MAN In The MOONS

By Eando Binder

JAHN couldn't block her view anymore. Now she looked out over the endless rock bareness, relieved only by sunken craters, still more hideous.

She bit her lips.

"*This* is Ganymede?" she said. "Not a tree. Not a blade of grass. More barren than a desert. Even Death Valley would seem like a luxuriant oasis here, Jahn."

Jahn Dempster snatched it up triumphantly.

"Don't you know, Ellyn? But then, you didn't keep up with the farm journals. They reclaimed and converted Death Valley last year, like the Sahara Desert. Death Valley is all green and growing now. Produces millions of bushels of wheat a year."

Ellyn didn't seem to hear her husband. She stared at the hostile terrain. It was blistering hot, but she shivered in the other cold. There was no warmth of life.

"Not one tiny flower," she said. "Or tuft of moss. Not even a . . . weed. Oh, Jahn, it's so ghastly horrible *ugly*."

Beautiful!

Tantho sighed. So beautiful Ganymede was. Or it had been,

before, circling Jupiter. Those pristine pure nights and frosty dim days. The shadowloveliness of starshine on the crags, touching each rocky crown with a soft blaze. The sparkle of sand.

So achingly lovely, his world, when sunlight spangled from the cracked white crater bottoms in a spidery pattern. Sheer wordless beauty.

"So ugly," Ellyn repeated from a tight throat.

Jahn put an arm around her, knowing it was about zero minus ten seconds before a cloudburst of tears.

"Green, Honey. I swear it. Ganymede will be all green and lush, in time. You've seen movies of Callisto, the first one they moved near Earth, nine years ago. Green. Heavenly green all over. Please, darling—"

"I'm all right, Jahn. It's just so . . . *bare*. The first time you see it. The same shock as empty space the first time, a bottomless black pit. Our new home . . . on a chunk of sand and solid rock."

"Wrong," said Jahn happily, waiting for that.

He stooped to pick up a handful of soil. It crumbled in his hand, loamy rich and dark.

"The soil conditioner crews worked all last year on Ganymede," he said, "getting it ready. You know that. Before, the ground was sterile sand and chipped rock. Barren of any rotting organic matter out of its lifeless, inorganic past. But now the soil is *alive*. Rich dirt, begging for seed."

"Yes, I know, dear. They work a miracle."

Jahn forged on, to keep those tears away.

"A miracle compounded of several simple processes. First, the rock grinders march, pulverizing the surface with their atomic triphammers. A fine layer a foot deep is ground up. Then, millions of tons of plant-food chemicals are dusted down from planes. Finally humus —manures, to be vulgarly precise —is stirred in, loaded with nitrogen-fixing bacteria. Presto, good topsoil all over."

He held the living, waiting soil, almost in disbelief himself.

"Earth took ages to furnish its own soil, an eon ago. They took one year, with Ganymede."

Jahn patted a bag they passed, in the slow, dragging line of homesteaders being checked through. "We just sow the seed now."

He gripped the tread of a harvester. "And reap."

They basked, now, in the shade of bags piled high.

"Oats, barley, rye, wheat," sang Jahn the farmer. "Vegetables, flow-

ers, grass, trees, hedges. Within a year there'll be patches of green here and there. As more homesteaders pour in after us, the green patches spread out, and merge, and sweep over hills and hide the craters."

He squinted at Ellyn, wasn't sure, and went on.

"Ganymede won't be tinted orange very long. In five years, it'll have a distinct greenish tinge, as seen from home. Like Callisto and the others. Our new home world will sparkle like an emerald in the sun, Ellyn."

Jahn let out his breath. The hump was passed. Tears wouldn't sparkle in the sun.

Ellyn took heart, from the bursting confidence of her man. She put the new green vision in her mind, blotting out what her eyes saw. She would pretend it was an optical illusion, this infinitely drab waste.

"You know," said Jahn, only half jokingly, "I feel as if Ganymede is *glad* we're here. Glad to have people and life on it. Poor old lonely world, without a creature on it for untold ages. Not a living soul."

Shade. Where was shade? The sun burned fiercely.

But Tantho did not crawl toward the cave, where the others were. They were shielded somewhat there, from the deadly rays of a sun five times nearer than before. But it was only temporary relief. The hot air still rolled in, searching them out. The weaker ones, the very old and very young, were dying fast now.

Tantho did not seek the cave. He had an idea.

It gave him desperate hope.

Jahn hopped off the jetplow as he saw Ellyn coming across the field, trailed by the dancing twins.

"We came for a lunchtime picnic with you, for a change," smiled Ellyn, unpacking the basket.

"Earth never had anything like this," boasted Jahn, chewing down the first of his Ganymede-grown radishes. "Taste twice as good. Grow twice as fast, too."

The last statement, at least, was no lie. The crops thrived mightily. Intense sunlight through the thin air doubled photosynthesis.

Jahn's face, despite his yard-wide straw hat, was mahogany. His hands, the only skin area exposed out of his chalk white coveralls, were negroid black. Ellyn too was dark old ivory. The twins were pickaninnies.

"Everything's going great," said Jahn, as they ate in the shade of a huge rock. "Only a month and look at those green fields, Ellyn. Beginining to look like home sweet home. A mite, anyway?"

"Half a mite," teased Ellyn.

The sprouting green surrounded their home like a vast lawn. Jahn was working in a circle, with male cunning, outward from the house, so that each day no matter which way Ellyn looked, she would see green fanning out. With the march of the green and the retreat of the drab brown, Ellyn was happier now.

But still not quite at ease.

She kept turning her eyes at times, quickly. In sudden darts and sidelong glances. As if trying to catch something . . .out of the corner of her eyes.

"Still seeing those moving rocks?" asked Jahn softly, without mockery.

Ellyn flushed guiltily.

"I know what you think, dear. Imagination. Delusions. But I tell you I *do* see movement at times. Just a slight movement of . . . something."

"Of rocks?" Jahn shook his head and weaved around, eloquently. "That's all there is here. within sight. Nothing but rock piles and fields. I ask you, can rocks move?"

"I just don't know, Jahn," Ellyn sighed. "I just don't know. Why do I keep sensing subtle movement? Out of the corner of my eye? When I turn and look directly, nothing moves. Yet . . . . there, Jahn!"

She jumped up, pointing.

"Among those rocks . . . *movement.*"

Tantho could pick up their thoughts, easily. His race had been espers from origin. Though the thoughts from them came at a rapid pace, making it hard to sort them out, he could sense the sympathy of that one mind. That one —Ellyn, in their vocal symbols— could be his friend. Listen to him.

Save them.

"Let's settle this right now," said Jahn, grabbing her hand and leading her to the patch of jumbled rocks. The rock grinder crews had purposely skipped around such spaced piles, leaving natural erosion breaks among the farmlands.

Jahn began poking among the rocks with his foot. "If any kind of snake or toad or something exists —"

"No," said Ellyn. "It was one of the *rocks* that moved. Just a bit. Only a tiny bit. But it moved, Jahn. It did."

Jahn swung around slowly, an icy chill down his spine for a moment. But not in fear of rocks that moved.

"Ellyn," he said with what he hoped was the right mixture of gentle sternness. "Please, you mustn't. Surely you know how mental obsessions can grow into neuroses. Or psychoses. Sorry to be so blunt, Honey. But you're a big girl. Mature. Face the thing and lick it. It's the only way. You've

got a guilt complex over nothing. Over the hag-ridden thought that this world holds life of some kind. That we're poachers of a world. Lick it, Ellyn. You must."

Ellyn swallowed, hung her head. "Oh, Jahn. All this trouble I'm causing you."

"Sure," said Jahn. "Now I warn you, Ellyn, my patience with you will run out soon, in eighty or ninety years."

She sobbed in his arms, grateful tears at the infinite tenderness in his banter.

Jahn kicked a round oblong rock squatting upright, leaning at a rather odd angle. "See? Nothing but rocks. Stones. Calcium and aluminum silicates. Rocks, dear. *Rocks.*"

Tantho did not feel the blow. Almost like a rock he was in outward form and hardness, protecting his inward organs from the original frigidity of their climate. Before, far from the remote sun, his rocky epidermis had been a warm blanket against the subzero extremes that froze all gases into icy chunks.

Yet his stony skin was little help against heat, a worse enemy to him. The heat worked inward steadily, creating havoc.

Tantho wanted to talk to the sympathetic, sensitive one. Tell her about them. Beg her to save them. But his radiations didn't seem to get across. They were not espers, unfortunately.

How else could he attract their attention? Now was his opportunity, while they were close. He tried to move. Tried to roll over. But they were gone, before he could even begin.

"Nothing but rocks," repeated Ellyn obediently. "I'll lick it, Jahn dear. You'll see. Nothing but rocks. And rocks can't move. Rocks can't live. Nothing but rocks, rocks, rocks."

"Good girl," said Jahn. "And listen, Honey. Don't be alarmed at your mental condition. It isn't serious. It's probably just a reflex conditioning from Earth. On Earth, no matter where you are, there is always *some* movement. Wind rustling tree leaves. Birds and insects darting. Unseen small animals slithering through grass, making it quiver. Clouds drifting overhead. Out of the corner of our eye, we always saw some movement on Earth."

"So I simply transferred that reflex up here," chimed in Ellyn, following his thought.

"A sort of mental optical illusion," Jahn expanded, seeing the relief in her eyes at the matter-of-fact psyching of her troubled mind. "Your mind keeps saying, 'Something *has* to be moving'. Like on Earth. Yet nothing does here, on

this lifebare world. And since there are no birds, insects, critters at all, your mind fashions the optical illusion that the *rocks* are moving. Lecture over. Tell me to shut my big slobbering mouth."

"Don't ever, when I need it." Ellyn squeezed his arm. "Thanks, love. I feel free now. I can look back at those rocks, knowing nothing will mo—" She choked for a moment. Peered. Then braced her shoulders and turned back.—"move. Optical trick, that's all. I'll remember. Keep drilling myself. Nothing moved. *Nothing.*"

Tantho groaned, silently. He had no powers of making speech, or any sounds. He had no mouth or eyes or any external appendages or organs. His outward surface was smooth and brown, like the smooth and brown rocks. He could not call them back in any way.

Tantho was blind, in the Earthly sense, but yet could see. Patterns of mental waves constantly shot out from his brain and bounced back, forming a radaric mental picture of the outside world. He could thus detect them easily, their forms. But always they were so quick, not waiting to see him move right in front of their eyes.

And he could not reach them with telepathy. He groaned again at the stark dilemma.

But their dwelling. He could see it with his longer range mental radar. He must try to reach that now. Slowly he began to roll and move toward the dwelling.

It was not far. He should reach it in a short time.

With the passing days, Ellyn kept dutifully repeating the saving thought in her mind. Rocks, rocks, rocks. Nothing but unliving, unmoving rocks.

Besides, now there was movement for her demanding eyes, when she looked out the kitchen window. The fields of green grain were tall enough now to wave and undulate in the breeze.

She did not have to imagine rocks moving anymore, to satisfy the reflexes of her brain.

Nothing but dead rocks.

"Tantho!" came the telepathic call from his mate, in the cave. "Where are you? Come to the cave before it's too late."

"No," radiated back Tantho. "There is only one hope, to reach the dwelling of those people. I just have to cross their fields."

"But there will be no shade, Tantho. No big rocks to protect you from the sun, across the open field. You will die before you reach them. Come to the cave."

"To die there instead?" returned Tantho rather sharply. "How many of you are left now?"

"Only a dozen. The warm air creeps in, more and more all the time."

"Thus the caves save us not," pointed out Tantho. "Here and there, in caves around our world, a few miserable thousands huddle like you, awaiting the end."

"But what good will it do to reach the ruthless barbarians who stole our world away without mercy?"

"No, that is wrong," said Tantho. "I have read their thoughts. I have found, through one, that they are not a ruthless people. They did not steal our world away, wantonly. They thought it dead, uninhabited. They did not know of us at all. They never conceived of our type of life, encased in a thick hard shell like rock. We just look like other rocks to them. They do not know we feed on them, being alive."

Tantho paused. Then, with an uplift in his radiations, he said, "But when I reach their dwelling, prove I'm alive, they'll leave our world and move it back. I'm sure of it."

"Then hurry, Tantho!"

"I'm going at my greatest speed now. I'll be there in just a few more moments."

"How the days fly by," said Ellyn. "Two months. We've been on Ganymede two whole months already."

"And ready to harvest our first big grain crops soon," said Jahn "We're not homesteaders anymore. We're bonafide farmers now. Or Basic Agriculturists, as the Agency always puts it, as though the good old word *farmer* is some sort of slur."

"And we're really Ganymedes now," marvelled Ellyn. "Not Terrans. Over the radio from Earth, that's how they refer to us, the Ganymedes. We're making this world *ours*."

They were sitting out on the air-conditioned porch, cool and breezy, with green fields rippling under the sun, feasting their eyes. Jahn also feasted his eyes on his wife, in the briefest of shorts and halter. And he was most pleased at her new vivacity. Her release from a mental incubus.

Ellyn's eyes were clear now. The strain had gone from her face. It had helped in the past weeks to keep that refrain dancing through her mind—"Nothing but rocks, rocks, rocks. Dead dead rocks."

She had seen no more optical illusions, at the rock pile a hundred yards off. No more hallucinations.

She could even laugh now as Jahn said gravely,

"A rock came up and bit me today, out in the north forty. You

see, it was a form of life with a rocky outer skin, eating rocks. He offered me a bite of a nice juicy chunk of granite, and I politely chewed it down. Wasn't bad, with salt and pepper."

"Stop it, Jahn," choked Ellyn, wiping her eyes. "I'll get one of my giggling fits. Now I can see how ridiculous it is. Rocks living and moving. What a silly I was."

Tantho hurried more, straining his utmost. Not a moment must be lost in reaching the dwelling. Around him now was the tall green grain, hiding him. They would not see him until he reached the cleared yard around their dwelling.

"Tantho!" come his mate's call. "What is this dwelling they live in? Why do they need it?"

"They are strange fragile creatures," answered Tantho. "They are of a different and much more delicate protoplasmic structure than we are. As our Thinkers sometimes theorized, they are probably carbon-base life, instead of silicon-base like we. Thus, being soft, they need clothing and dwellings and tools to help their weak hands. We need none of those, and thus we leave no real clues around for them to even notice. No dwellings, clothing, machines. We live just as ourselves, attuned completely to elemental nature."

"But why didn't they notice from the start that we move, and are therefore alive?"

"That is the strangest part," mused Tantho, as he rolled over again on his steady course. "To them, our movement is infinitely slow. *Even as I try to move before their eyes, they pause only a flashing micromoment and are gone like a ghost. To me they move with* blurring speed, *you see. Our time senses, obviously, are vastly different. It takes me a dark-and-light period combined to roll over once. In short, just an instant.*

"But that instant, to them, seems to be a vast stretch of time, in which they move and live and do countless tasks, all in a flashing high-speed blur of motion."

"Why do they move at this incredible speed?"

"I think," ventured Tantho, "it is due to their living under a hot near sun, increasing the tempo of all living things, of the carbon type. Whereas our life, when orbiting around the giant belted planet, was governed by what to them would be unthinkable cold. In that cold, normal to us, we lived and moved a hundredfold more slowly than they."

The sun rose and the sun set, over and over.

Jahn prepared for the harvest. Ellyn used no more frozen vegetables from the deep freeze, when

their own homegrown products were so much fresher.

The twins romped around a big oblong stone in the fields and when it seemed to move, ever so slightly, they yelled "bang, bang" at it and then went on to other games.

"That was why those first visitors, exploring our world before they moved it, never noticed us?"

"Exactly," returned Tantho. "In fact, if you'll remember, we pretty much ignored them too, those swift blurred shapes that wandered briefly among us. We thought nothing of it. In turn, not noticing us, not finding any carbon life as they know it, they pronounced our world lifeless. And took it away."

"A horrible day! Only yesterday it was. The stars wheeled, our world spun and moved, and the sun grew into a huge ball of flame. But how could they move our world so swiftly across space, in one short day between sleeps?"

"Come," said Tantho impatiently. "That day was a hundred times longer to them, obviously. Time enough for them to tow us across space. But they can tow it back too. The key to our salvation."

"But will they, even knowing of us?"

"I'm sure of it!" Tantho was grimly excited. "They are not cruel. In the mind of one—Ellyn, she is called—I have read of their strict code, never to wrest worlds away from native inhabitants. They will give own world back."

"You're all over it now, Ellyn," Jahn said, pleased. "I can tell. Steady, calm, non-neurotic. But tell me just out of curiosity. What if we *had* found life here? What then?"

"We'd leave, Jahn."

Ellyn said it quietly. But with the quiet force of purring atomic dynamos. About a dozen of them.

"Even after all this?" explored Jahn, fascinated. "All our work? All our uprooting from Earth, our striving, our hard-earned crops growing? All that wiped out? Cancelled? Left behind?"

"Certainly," said Ellyn. "We'd leave, Jahn. Even though I love Ganymede now, and its future promise. And the others would have to leave too. I'd see to that, if nobody else did. I'd go straight to the Space Reclamation Board and raise a stink and make them tow Ganymede back where it belonged."

"You *mean* that, Ellyn," marvelled Jahn. "You really mean it. With all your heart and soul and a million nerve ganglia. You'd become Carrie Nation, hacking down all opposition, wiping out a shameful blot on human honor, if we tried to keep Ganymede after finding life. You'd screech and scream and fight till we untangled the

whole mess, wouldn't you?"

"Yes."

Jahn almost shivered at the implacable finality of that one word. "I'd pity the army that tried to stand in your way, my sweet little lovable tigress. They wouldn't stand a chance unless they had something better than the helium bomb."

"Tantho! Can you make it?"

"I must, even though the sun scorches fiercely now, and I grow weak. I must."

"Yes, you must, Tantho. You are our only hope. If you can reach them, contact them, make them move our world back home, we are saved. Some few thousands of us."

"I will get there," radiated back Tantho, and then fell silent, conserving all his energy in the task of moving, as the sun blistered down hellishly on him.

He was close now, to the dwelling. It had only been a short distance, really, from the rock pile, no more than a hundred times his diameter. Some thirty dark-and-light periods had flashed by. Not a long time.

But the sun. The burning sun. Luckily, there had been a gradual downward slope from the rock pile to the dwelling, making his roll easier.

Still, Tantho was in agony. He was weak from the beating sun. He had not eaten at all. No rocks in that soft new loam, for him to absorb by silicon osmosis. He ached and burned, his brain on fire. But he kept on.

Close now.

Close.

Ellyn looked out the window at the green fields dancing. She was smiling.

Suddenly her face froze.

"Jahn, that rock," she pointed. "How did that rock get there, through the fields, *close to the house?"*

Startled, they ran out to it. The large oblong rock lay on its long side, at the edge of the oat field, where it broke off at the lawn's border. It was the only rock around.

Ellyn stared stricken.

"Moving rocks," she whispered. "Was I right all the time? Jahn, moving rocks. It came all the way here from the rock pile, a hundred yards off. Followed us. It was hidden by the tall oats and we didn't see it till it got to the cut lawn. Jahn, it *moved* here."

"Sure it did," said Jahn easily, gulping his lungs full again, after a squint. "Ever hear of rocks rolling downhill, Ellyn? See that slope from the rock pile to here? It's as simple as that."

"But what *started* it moving?"

"Ellyn, please. What starts aval-

anches? Rocks just slip, at times. Maybe this one was unbalanced and needed only a slight push by a gust of wind. And look how round and symmetrical it is, perfect for rolling down a slope. By *gravity*."

Ellyn still stared in stark indecision.

"All you say may be true, Jahn. Or it may not. There's one sure test. I'm going to sit and watch this th—rock. For hours or days, if need be. If it moves in the slightest . . ."

Ellyn watched all night, under the Earthshine and multiple moonglow. Her eyes grew bleary but she never once took them away.

Jahn watched with her, silently. One slightest move. And that was that.

And that was—*what?* Jahn's face was drawn. He grew haggard within and finally came out with it. "Ellyn, listen carefully. What if it moves?"

She spoke in surprise, without turning her eyes from the rock. "We tell the authorities, of course."

"Why?"

This time Ellyn's eyes did jerk away, to lock with Jahn's brooding intensity.

"Jahn, what do you mean?"

Jahn measured out the words icily. "I mean it would be so easy to just . . . forget to report it."

"Jahn—no!"

"Yes," he snapped, in a more violent tone than he had ever used before with her. "Would you place *them* above *us?* Above all us farmers? Above Earth's desperate moon-moving needs for food? And Ellyn—above me and the twins, and our dreams? Think, Ellyn. It would be brutal."

"Not as brutal as committing world larceny, compounded by race murder."

"But, Ellyn—"

"Jahn! You're talking crazy. I don't know you this way. What has this brought out in you—what? Nothing will change my mind. But you, Jahn. Answer me straight. You must, now. You would *not* want to report it?"

Jahn grew more haggard. The night wind blew cold, but drops fell glistening from his chin.

"I don't know, Ellyn. *I just don't know.*"

They were close, just a few feet apart. But they looked across a chasm now, at each other, as if they had been whisked to the opposite ends of infinity.

Neither could summon up a word to bridge the chasm.

Their eyes swung back to the rock.

If it moved . . . . .

Tantho strained to move. Now was the time, before their fixed

eyes. They could not fail to see, even if to them it was the merest tremor. For once they did not come like flitting ghosts and whirl away at blurring speed. They sat still, for long moments, watching for him to move.

Yes, they would notice before long how he moved slightly. Tantho's agony eased, from his previous ordeal. In a moment they would realize there was native life, that Ganymede was not freely theirs. In the next brief moment, with their swift manner of doing things, they would evacuate. Not many moments later, they would be towing Ganymede back to the sunless places.

The blessed cool!

Tantho's thoughts already basked under cold starshine. Back in the heatless outer dark, they could resume their lives, the few thousands that were fortunately left. They could go back to their...

Tantho's thoughts paused.

Back to . . . what?

Back to the browsing among the choice rocks, for the tasty ones. Back to drowsing under somber Jupitershine for somnolent hours. Thinking of . . . nothing. Browsing and drowsing. Was that their life, in essence? Nothing else?

Browsing and drowsing . . .

Tantho faced it then, because he had to. Age upon age, browsing and drowsing. As the Thinkers had often preached in sad bitterness, they were at the end of a long evolutionary decline. They were useless in the scheme of things, the more rabid Thinkers had self-denounced. Rutted, buried alive, pursuing no arts, sciences, philosophies. Having no goal. Waiting for oblivion. Apathetically. The sum total of their existence.

Tantho tried to stop the thoughts but they ground on.

Ages ago, said the Thinkers, in youthful race vigor, they had used then-existing appendages to build and make and achieve. Great temples, roadways, tunnels. Exquisite art, stirring music, immortal writings. They had reached a peak of fine living.

Then, decay. Time was spent too much in the mind, not enough in the balancing physical world. Blind, perhaps mocking evolution took away their forfeited limbs. They retreated into smooth rock forms, attuned to elemental nature in the way vegetables were, with vegetative penalties. They sank into indolence. Into spirtual bankruptcy. Into what was left, browsing and drowsing.

Their civilization fell to ruin, to dust, to atoms. Not a painting, arch, tool was left. How could the exploring Earthmen be blamed, seeing no evidence of thinking life?

What else could they do but declare Ganymede dead? How could they know of creatures, slothful as true rocks, who only browsed and drowsed . . . browsed and drowsed . . .

The shame burned Tantho more than the sun had. And the thoughts of the silent two watching him wth big wondering eyes burned more.

Please don't move, thought Ellyn. Please, please. Please just be a rock. A rock that rolled down the slope by sheer accident.

Jahn! My Jahn. *My* Jahn? Not if it moves. He'll turn from me coldly, when I report it. Hate me. Leave me. It will smash us apart, break us, I know . . . yet . . .

It must be. I must report it. Heaven help me but that can't change. If the rock moves, Ganymede is not ours. Never was. Never can be. If only Jahn could feel as I do. As a woman does, thinking of *their* children dying. And the many unborn robbed of their divine right to live. Yes, divine. That's written in the planetary code those same words. By scientific minds. Humbly.

Jahn, can't you see? If only I could put it in words that would get through. But I can't do your thinking for you. Can't step in between your soul and yourself. Think, Jahn. Think of creatures yanking Earth a billion miles away, carelessly, into freezing cold. What then, Jahn? What bitter curses would you heap upon them as the twins died and the human race was snuffed out? Why is it different the other way around? How can it be?

Please be a rock. Please . . . .

Tantho wished he were a rock.

Cruel, that they be forced to evacuate, leaving broken dreams piled behind. Sad, the spit-on-hands bustle of the enterprising humans turned away, empty-handed. Tantho admired their refreshing energy, uplifting challenge, soul-singing joy of life. The life-joy was long extinct among Tantho's people. They lived to die. When welcome Death came, thy upbraided him for tarrying.

What a pity that the bright young Earthmen must be denied Ganymede and its promise.

PITY?

It faced Tantho, then, squarely. Sympathy for them had grown till it shouted a question at him.

Which deserved Ganymede MORE? What real claim had the Ganymedes beyond the accident of birth?

Tantho shrank at the abyss ahead. It was within his power to take it away from them. Or give it to them. The choice yawned and he could not escape it. SHOULD HE MOVE? OR NOT?

Out of all the millions of their people and his, the choice was Tantho's alone.

Tantho wanted to think it out. He wished he could shut out their thoughts, beating at him strongly. He could shield them aside, of course, if he desired. But he couldn't because he WANTED to listen.

Smashup, thought Jahn.

In his mind an explosion rocked him over and over. If that rock moves, Ellyn will report it. I can't stop her. Nothing can stop it. The smashup.

Hate Ellyn for it? No. I'll love her the more for it, in a way. But nothing will bring us together again. A pile of broken hopes between us. higher than we can climb, no matter how hard we try to reach each other. Ellyn will have a new guilt, over me. I'll be a forgiving martyr, the worst species of creature known. We'll try to kiss and make up with cold lips and frozen hearts and we'll shudder and draw apart, and we won't try anymore.

It went off in his mind again. Smashup. Two souls colliding with dreadful impact.

Ellyn, you little fool. If you would only agree to do it my way . . . but she can't. Dishonorable. Race murder. World thieving. Rot. An accident, Act of God. A huge error. Everybody makes mistakes. Nobody's to blame. Why change it now, at this late stage? Why not arrange to transport the Ganymedians to another moon out Jupiter way? Make amends within reason, but keep Ganymede?

Ellyn, if I could only convince you. To be practical, horse-sensible, objective. How much better it would be to balance factors, for the most good all around, instead of a reverse upheaval with everybody losing his shirt.

If only . . . nuts! Hopeless, goddamit.

Ellyn . . . . oh, God.

Tantho writhed, hearing.

Should he move or not? The question still boomed.

No, no. Wrong thoughts. How could he be disloyal to his own? It was their right to live, despite all. He must not take it upon himself to murder his people. And the many unborn. Empty, hollow lives, for another age. But what else was there to do? Who was he to judge and weigh the destinies of two races? At the last bitter dreg, he was still a Ganymedian. Blood-thick ties could not be severed by the passionless sharp knife of pure intellect.

He must move.

He strained his best. His very utmost.

Ellyn jumped up. It was dawn. She pointed quietly.

"It moved, Jahn."

"Yes, it moved, Ellyn."

Ellyn had to turn and look at him. There was no help for it. She saw his haggard eyes. and the cold hollowness inside.

"Jahn, dearest!" the thought wept in her mind. "Goodbye, Jahn . . . ."

She gathered herself. "I'm sorry, Jahn. I wanted it to be a rock. I prayed all night. I have to report it now."

"No, Ellyn. You won't.

Ellyn drew back in icy fright, at the glare in his eyes.

"Jahn, I—please don't—what do you mean, Jahn—"

"You won't," said Jahn, "because I will."

Ellyn hardly had strength for the second shock. "Jahn! You're . . . *smiling?*"

"Any law against that?" said Jahn. He held the microwave phone in his hand, knuckles white from the grip of hours. "Relax, kid. I didn't plow my psyche. I was ready since Earthset two hours ago. Ready to report that Ganymede was not for rent, sale, or human occupancy, period."

"J-just for my sake?"

"Hell no, Honey. For mine. A man must live with his wife, but first of all with himself. My dirty mental linen washed out nice and white, even if it took time. Four words made it stark simple. To each his own."

"Jahn," Ellyn wept, for him. "To give it all up like this. What did it do to you? You must feel . . . . awful."

"Yes, awfully good," said Jahn. "That's the funny part, Ellyn. The real pay-off. Once I saw your side, or *their* side, and made up my mind to play it that way—presto. I felt like a million bucks. Whereas our losses, leaving Ganymede, won't be more than five thousand. A net profit of $995,000. I know a windfall when I see one, you betcha."

"Oh Jahn!" They were joy tears this time, spilling down his shoulder.

Saved! At the last moment. Tantho sang his own silent joy. He had known the humans would come through. He had saved his people, if not himself.

Then, in hasty panic at his weakness, he sent out his long range telepathic call, to his mate in the far cave.

"Saved!" he radiated. "Do you hear me? The humans saw me move. They know I'm alive. They will return our world. Saved . . . . do you hear? Do you—?"

"Yes, but too late," came back weakly from his mate. "All the others in this cave . . . . dead. Only waiting for your call kept me alive a bit longer. But the news . . . .

too late . . . too late . . . goodb . . . . ."

The mental whisper died.

Allowing only a moment for his sorrow, Tantho ranged for another cave. His mate was dead, but the rest would be glad at the eleventh-hour reprieve from race execution.

"Spaceport exchange still jammed?" said Ellyn enxiously.

Jahn nodded at the busy buzz from the phone. "Housewives ordering the morning groceries—which they won't need. And us sitting on the big news of Ganymedian life."

"I could scream," said Ellyn. "And probably every moment counts. Keep trying, Jahn. We must get through."

Puzzled, Tantho ranged for the the next cave . . . the next . . . the next . . . .

Silence. From all.

Then Tantho knew. The choice had been taken out of his hands. Into Other Hands.

Jahn hung up. "They're rushing over bio experts right away."

He took Ellyn in his arms. They smiled.

"You're mine," said Ellyn. "And I'm yours."

"Even if Ganymede," said Jahn, "isn't ours."

But Ganymede was theirs, as they would find out.

Tantho was glad.

Then, the last Ganymedian moved no more.

THE END

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THE DOG Who Wanted To Go HOME

By Rick Sargent

CHILLING night winds whipped Claire Winslow's taffy colored hair over her smooth high-boned cheeks and playfully tried to lift her tailored blue skirt as she entered the lobby of the apartment building. Her high heeled shoes tapped out a gay tune on the marble floor as she walked hurriedly to the elevator.

Excitement rose within her as the elevator ascended. She could not help wondering what the light tan mongrel had done to her apartment while she was out with Henry Lawyer. Dogs were strictly forbidden, but there was something about this one that set him apart, and he had looked at her so pleadingly, she could not pass him by.

He had been sitting on the curb when she came home from work. His large feet were spread wide, and his mournful expression told her that he was lost. He was about the size of a half-grown police dog, and looked well cared for. As she paused at the door, he stood up, walked over to her, sat down and wagged his tail.

He winked at her, and the words, "I'm Albert," were as clear as if he had spoken.

Impulsively she had let him into the building and smuggled him up to her apartment.

Her apartment faced the elevator, and as she stepped out, she heard her television set blaring. With growing apprehension, she opened the door and went in.

Albert was sitting on the ottoman. He held a glass between his paws and waved it at her gaily, then turned back toward the television set and yapped happily at a cowboy movie.

She leaned weakly against the wall and stared at the dog. "Oh, no, it can't be. It just can't be!" she

His name was Albert. He smoked, he drank, and he swore. Her name was Claire, and she was engaged to a very proper young man named Henry. Henry would not have approved of Albert; but then Albert, gay dog that he was, definitely didn't approve of Henry, which made them even.

murmured, "What have I let myself in for—what have I done?"

With determination fathered by disbelief, she walked over to him, took the glass from his reluctant paws and sniffed it, "My Scotch!" she said accusingly.

Albert hic-uped.

"Just what kind of a dog are you?" she demanded.

"Sit down. It's time we came to an understanding."

The words were spoken, yet unspoken. They were just there.

She nodded numbly and sat down on the divan.

He turned off the television set with a brush of his paw and began pacing back and forth in front of her as she watched him bewilderedly.

"I am projecting my thoughts to you, and reading yours. I have to trust someone, and it might as well be you . . ."

Claire closed her eyes for a moment, and hoped that he would be gone when she opened them.

He was still there.

"I don't believe this," she said flatly, "This isn't happening—I'm having halucinations."

"Stop that nonsense," he commanded, "I assure you it is happening and it's very serious."

He sat down at her feet, and his sorrowful brown eyes seemed to hypnotize her into silence. "To begin with, I came from outer space—the planet you call Mars. I and my master, Lt. Juxmar Quoron, were on an observation filght. I slipped into my space jacket and went out of the ship for a romp. When I came near the surface of Earth, I saw the cutest little Cocker Spanial—well, anyway, she clawed up my rocket tubes and now I'm stranded until you help me get back to the ship."

"How could I possibly help you?" Claire protested. "How do I know any of this is happening? I don't have any way of . . ."

"I know. I know," he projected insistantly. "You must believe in me. I think I can show you how to build a communication set that will contact Jux. He'll be glad to come down after me."

She looked at his furry face, wrinkled in intensity, and began to laugh. "As long as I'm going wacky, I might as well go first class. I'll find you a nice kennel because you can't stay here and then . . ."

His tail began to wag, then drooped. "Why can't I stay here?"

"Rules, boy, rules. No dogs allowed--not even space hounds."

"But I won't bark," he answered, "and I can hide if anyone comes in."

"Yes, but you'll have to go for walks, and . . ."

"Silly girl." He nodded at the bathroom's open door, "I'm not a child."

Claire giggled, "All right, I'll help. What do I do?"

Pointing a paw at the television set, he projected, "Get me books on this thing. It looks similiar to our Telescreen sets so I may be able to use some of its parts. I'll need blueprints and tools too."

"They're expensive," she objected.

"Don't worry about that. I'll have Jux bring something to repay you."

The following morning, Claire phoned the office where Henry and she worked and asked him to tell their supervisor that she was ill. Henry quoted one of his inevitable proverbs. Then she took a cab downtown and returned with the supplies Albert wanted.

She watched as the dog nosed around the four large boxes of parts and excitedly leafed through the books.

Tossing her checkbook into a desk drawer she sat down wearily and looked at the dog. "I hope you're satisfied. I bought everything in sight."

Albert barked pleasantly and paid no attention.

Angrily she said, "I hope you realize this took almost all the money in my account."

Albert busily tipped a box of parts on its side and examined them, "Damn it, you'll get your money back."

"What if we can't contact your Lieutenant?"

He refused to project an answer to that.

"Will I have to read those books to you?"

"No," he answered, "I'll be able to read them myself. Your language is simple compared with Mar-

tian."

Jumping up, he ran to the desk, pulled open a drawer with his paws and scratched out a pencil and several sheets of paper. He carried them back to the pile of parts in his mouth.

"What are you going to do with those?"

He wiggled the pencil until he had it clasped upright between his paws, and began to draw swiftly.

She went over to him and glanced down. He was making diagrams as neatly as any in the books. Shaking her head, she went back to the divan and waited.

After eight hours, he had completed several hundred drawings, scattered parts wildly over the carpet, and then arranged them in small groups with the drawings.

At last, he dropped the pencil and projected, "I'm tired and hungry."

She escorted him to the kitchen and offered things from the cupboards and refrigerator, none of which seemed to please him.

"What about Kwispy-Kwunchy?" he asked.

"What?"

"Kwispy-Kwunchy," he repeated, "You know, the big box the man holds up on television."

"But that's a breakfast cereal, wouldn't you rather have dog biscuits?"

He spit out an imaginary biscuit, "No, I want Kwispy-Kwunchy, with super energy power."

"I tried them once," Claire said, "they're awful."

"They looked good to me, and I want some," he insisted.

Claire sighed, "Oh all right," and left for the store.

When she came back, the delicious aroma of frying steak drifted through the apartment. Entering the kitchen, she saw that the table was set for one, and an appetizing meal laid out.

"Why you little darling," she said patting the dog affectionatly.

"I thought you'd like it. Now, where's my Kwunchy?"

He tore the box open and munched contentedly. When he finished, he ambled toward the living room and a few moments later, she heard vile language being projected. After replacing the dishes, she went to investigate.

Albert was standing in the middle of a spilled box of matches and pawing at a package of cigarettes.

She laughed and picked them up as he grasped one of the slender tubes between his paws and asked for a light.

He inhaled and thought, "There are a number of things I can do, like fixing dinner, but when it comes to handling small things, well, paws just weren't made that

way. That's why you'll have to do most of the assembly of the set."

"You could make a million in show business if we can't get you home."

He shook his head vigorously. "No one but you must ever know the truth about me. Remember when you asked about women's fashions back home, and I wouldn't tell you? well, that goes for everything else."

"What would you do if I called the newspapers right now and told them all about you?"

Albert grinned, "Go ahead. Tell them you have a dog from Mars in your apartment."

"I wouldn't, even if they would believe it," she said quietly, "I like you and wouldn't do anything you didn't want me to."

Resting his paw against her leg he looked up at her, "Why don't you come home with me? You'd like Mars, that much I can tell you."

"Don't be silly. What about my job, Henry, and, well, everything I love is here. I couldn't go charging off to another world."

Albert looked unconvinced as he went back to his diagrams and part arranging.

During the next two days, under Albert's supervision and urging, she worked on the set. He swore at her when she was clumsy, praised her when things went well, and constantly demanded more speed.

On the morning of the third day, Claire wiped presperation from her forehead and said, "It's two o'clock in the morning, can't we stop now?"

Albert shook his head, "Solder that capacitor to the upper terminal, those two resistors just below it, and we're finished."

"But I'm so sleepy . . ."

His brown eyes met hers hypnotically, compelling her to continue. "We have only a day before Jux will be down to the minimum supplies needed to reach home. We must try to contact him tonight."

"How can we?" she asked, "we haven't even started on the viewing tube, or the receiving circuit."

He lay down resting his head on outstretched paws, his eyes closed tiredly and he projected, "I know, but there's no time for them. We can only send, and hope."

Claire slumped against the set and began to cry. "All our work, all the money I had, everything we've done, wasted. Henry thinks I'm insane because I haven't let him visit me and won't go out with him . . ."

"Oh damn Henry!"

She glared at him, "Don't you dare think that. He's good, kind, ambitious, and he loves me."

Albert burped.

With a rush of nervous energy,

she made the final connections and threw the soldering gun at Albert who ducked behind the davenport.

As he peeked out, she yelled at him, There it is, all finished, your masterpiece. It's nothing but a worthless pile of junk! I'm sorry I ever saw you!"

He came out from behind the couch, picked up his pencil and started writing a series of dots and dashes. "Is there a large open space outside town where Jux can land?" he asked calmly.

"Yes," she answered softly, and felt foolish for her outburst. "There's a small valley about twenty miles from here. There are only a few farms, and if he came in at night, he wouldn't be seen."

"Excellent," Albert replied, "Turn on the set and send this."

Claire wiped her tears away, and with a growing sense of excitement, flicked the switch.

The set hummed faintly. The sound increased until the pulsating rhythm was like a radio at high volume.

"Well, go ahead," he urged her. "Keep your dots and dashes clear . . ."

Her finger descended on the key and began to tap out the message.

"Keep repeating it," Albert projected.

She was almost through the third sending when a shower of sparks burst from the set.

"What's happening?" she screamed.

"Turn it off, quick!"

Thick white smoke spurted from the set and floated around the room. When it stopped, Albert pawed at the set for a moment, then walked over to the divan and lay down listlessly.

Turning his eyes away from her, he projected, "The parts were never made for this, but I hoped they'd hold up a little better."

"What is it? What's wrong? Can we fix it?" she asked.

"Not in time," he answered, "unless one of those messages got through to him . . ."

"But there is a chance, isn't there?"

He refused to answer.

"Isn't there?" she repeated shaking him.

"Not much," he admitted.

The next evening, Claire walked the floor with increasingly nervous steps. "How are we going to get out there? Why do I have to go anyway?" she asked kicking the shattered set.

"Oh stop it!" Albert projected. "We can take a cab, and you have to go if you want your money back."

She lit a cigarette, "How will I get back? He's supposed to come in at eleven. I can't get to a phone

way out there."

Albert smirked, "Oh, borrow Henry's car. He must be useful for something."

She could hear Henry's reply, "Neither a borrower nor a lender be, I always say," and that would be the end of that.

Albert smiled, and she knew he was reading her thoughts. "Call him. You can talk him into it."

She walked to the phone and dialed.

"Hello, Henry? I'm in a spot, will you let me borrow your car?"

Henry quoted his proverb.

She let her voice drop to a low, sultry pitch. "No, I can't explain why, but I must have the car. You'll let me have it, if you love me."

"Sorry," he answered, "I never break one of my little rules."

She spilled honey into her words and flavored it with desperation as she said, "Darling, I'll marry you tomorrow if you'll do this for me."

She heard Henry gulp and mumble something about their wedding day being set for next month.

She bit her lip and glanced at Albert who had put his paws over his ears and was rolling his eyes.

She put her hand over the mouthpiece until she stopped laughing and then said seriously, "I know, darling, but . . ." She hesitated and then added rapidly, "I love you so much I can't wait."

He stuttered and stammered, but agreed to loan her the car.

She relaxed, "Don't bother to bring it over. Your garage man knows me, so I'll pick it up there. Good night, Honey, and sweet dreams."

She dropped the receiver back on the hook slowly.

"What a performance," Albert giggled.

"It's not funny," she said in a whisper. "I felt like—like a whore."

He stopped laughing. "I'm sorry, and thanks. You'll never know what . . ."

She shrugged. "If it gets you home, what's the difference."

He rested his head on his paws, "I just hate to think of you married to that . . ."

She glared at him reprovingly, "Henry will make a very good husband."

"Oh, all right. I won't even think otherwise."

They arrived at the valley just after ten o'clock. Claire cut the motor, let the car roll to a stop, and turned off the headlights.

"We couldn't have picked a worse night," Albert lamented. "Look at those clouds! They're as black as outer space."

"Would he be able to get through

the storm even if he received our message?" she asked.

"It won't make it any easier to find us, but he can land if . . ."

"What if he doesn't find us?"

"Then I don't care what happens. I couldn't stay around Henry very long without chewing him up."

"It's nearly eleven," Claire said holding her watch up to the dashlight.

"Give me a cigarette," Albert projected.

They smoked in silence as the rendezvous hour approached.

Albert shifted positions continually and peered out the window. "Why doesn't he come?"

She looked at the watch again, "Nearly midnight now, maybe. . ."

"There are no maybes. He's got to come. He's got to!"

Claire looked away. Tears formed at the corners of her eyes and she blinked rapidly to keep from crying. She could not help feeling they were fighting for a lost cause, and yet poor Albert was so confident.

The hours lumbered by. She tried to keep her eyes open but they remained closed for increasing moments, and then she fell asleep.

"Look!" the projected word seemed to explode and she was jerked back to consciousness.

Far away, across the mountain tops, a thin trail of red flame arched through the drab night and came toward them.

"He's here! He's here!" Albert proclaimed joyously. "Turn on the headlights so he'll see us."

She flipped on the lights and blinked them several times.

The flaming trail roared overhead just below the ponderous rain clouds.

"They're not bright enough!" Albert projected loudly.

"Let's build a fire," Claire suggested.

"No time. He can only circle a few minutes."

"He's coming back," she said watching as the ship turned at the edge of the valley, hovered a second and then rushed toward them.

Albert pressed his nose against the windshield, "So close to success, and yet so far—why didn't we think of this?"

"Get out of the car, I've got an idea."

"Hurry, he can only make one more pass."

Claire grabbed a wrench, crawled under the car, twisted the drain plug on the gas tank, then rolled out and began to push the car.

After thirty frantic yards, she replaced the plug and they pushed the car away from the trail of gasoline.

The ship made its turn at the end of the valley and started its

final pass as she dropped a match into the gas and leaped back.

The flames shot high and bright for a few seconds, and then died quickly. They stood close to each other and urged the ship to turn around.

As the ship reached the far end of the valley, its fiery trail disappeared.

Tears made crooked paths across her cheeks as she turned toward the car.

Albert stared at the rim of the mountains and wailed mournfully.

She knelt down beside him and stroked his smooth fur gently, "Don't worry, boy. I can always handle Henry, so there'll always be a home for you with us."

His head hung down, "It's no good. You know it wouldn't work. People would see me doing un-doggie things, and Henry wouldn't understand either. Then there would be publicity, and they'd haul me off to some college to be tested and studied . . ."

"Albert," she whispered, hugging him.

"Let me stay out here. I'll roam around the hills. I'll be all right. Go on home. Forget me."

He broke away from her and ran across an open field.

She watched his small body fade away in the darkness.

Rain began to chatter a dirge of failure and regret on the ground around her. The chilling raindrops lanced through her thin coat as an overpowering sense of fatigue seemed to drop from the dark clouds and settle over her. Her mouth, burned dry by the dozens of cigarettes smoked during the long wait, contracted painfully in nervous retching sobs.

Rising, she looked into the night, hoping to see Albert.

Lightning ripped across the valley, and in its flash, she saw a glowing white ship glide into the field and come to a stop.

She stared at the needle-like shape and the tall fins that extended from the rear, and gasped as the sleek back opened.

A tall young man dressed in a light yellow uniform stepped out of the ship and Albert raced out of the darkness and into his arms.

"Hello you old space scoundrel. This will teach you to go outside the ship."

The man's thoughts were projected, but unlike the dog's flat rendering, they had a warm, pleasing tone.

"Whan we saw the trail of the ship disappear, we thought you had missed our signal fire," Albert projected.

"No, I saw it," Jux replied, "but I shut off the motors and stalled in, there's not much space here."

The dog licked his face, jumped down and ran to her wagging his tail. Taking the hem of her skirt in his mouth, he pulled her back to the ship.

Albert made the introductions and added, "If it hadn't been for Claire, I could never have reached you."

Jux smiled at her, "I owe you a great deal . . ."

"How about her money?" Albert interrupted.

"Sure, thirty ounces of gold," he answered untying a heavy leather-like sack from his belt.

He handed it to her, and as their fingers touched, there was a pleasing sensation, like a faint electric shock. She looked into his grey eyes and they seemed to engulf her in a sensuous glow.

"Bring her with us," Albert suggested.

He smiled at the dog, "Maybe she doesn't want to go."

Claire blushed, "That's right, Lieutenant. I'm being married tomorrow . . ."

"To a drip," Albert added.

She turned uncertainly toward the car, barely hearing their goodbyes.

Her hand played with the door handle. The rain didn't seem to matter now, as she gave them one last look.

Albert waved his paw, but Juxmar's eyes were what held her gaze. His thoughts slammed into her one after the other, relentlessly calling to her, urging her to make one wild leap into adventure.

"Come with us, Claire. You'll be happy. I'll make you happy. This is it, I know that, we both do."

The thoughts pelted her like steel raindrops, clinging, demanding, pleading.

"No," she thought, "it's crazy. I don't even know you. Henry loves me. He needs me. My job, my friends, everything is here . . . "

The thoughts were drumming at her more rapidly, insisting, persuading, begging.

"Haven't you ever wanted to do anything crazy? Don't you want adventure and happiness? Come with us Claire. You belong . . ."

Her heart beat like a raging animal tearing at its cage, and smashing its way to freedom.

With one wild fling, she tossed the gold into the car and ran toward Jux.

They met in the center of the field, and his kiss sent tingling flashes of pulsating fire throughout her body. It lifted her whirling through the clouds and sent her skipping along the milky-way.

"Jux, oh Jux . . ." she whispered as Albert hung his head and wished he hadn't been born a dog.

THE END

EDITORIAL . . .

(*Continued from page* 6)

our pin-head buried in the mud of nowhere-to-go, of the idea-that was, of the ideal without an *I*. And our opportunity consists in the fact that we recognize that we must start all over, think of new things, get into the habit of dreaming, rather than being wakefully alert and zealous guardians of the thing-that-is. Bill's like the latter. He has a lot of statistics showing exactly what "sold best", and exactly what didn't. For instance. he knows that sex on a cover means 5000 more sales than no sex on a cover; that action means 5000 more sales than no action; that sex *and* action are an unbeatable combination. He knows that red is the best color to attract attention. He knows that people want to be entertained first, and to think last. He knows that romance and glamor and escapism are vital to the happiness of mankind. He is wise beyond his years in many things. He should be successful. He will be very angry at us for saying that that he won't be. He will even set out to prove how wrong we are. He will be an almost invisible blur of energy—and because of the energy, he will achieve certain things. But he will fail. And he should. Until he is a failure, he won't know that he doesn't know anything, and that it's best not to know. If we reach a goal, where is there to go? If we finally *know*, what is there to learn? If we stand on the highest mountain, where is there to climb? When we have achieved, why should we strive?

Other Worlds is the one magazine that seems to us to have a goal, that presents the opportunity to strive, can embark on a course that may teach us something, can climb to new heights. We have told you in previous editorials that its standpoint in respect to sales, profits, reputation, etc, are practically nil, in comparison to those magazines that lead it in all these respects. It s even behind the magazine published by Bill Hamling, whom we have just called a failure. Where does that put us? Right where we like to be! We aren't interested in "being on top"; we don't look for adulation; we don't like to wear hats too small for us. We're impractical dreamers. We are science fiction *fans*. And the future is an exciting adventure to us. Tomorrow is much more important than today, and yesterday is a dead thing not worthy even of memory. That-which-has-been-established is a dreary thing to us, lacking totally in spirit.

Yes, Bill is wrong, and we're glad we know he's wrong. Because

now we won't make the mistake of falling for that old saw: "time-proven". The only thing time can prove is that even a headstone wears away and vanishes, and a name carved on it is meaningless. Let's say: Here Lies Bill, A Man Who Knew! If He Hadn't Known, He Might Not Have Flown.

We like to use Bill as we are using him now. He's such a wonderful example of what-not-to-do; but into the bargain, he's such a wonderful guy that he doesn't mind being taken as such as example. He's got the abilty to take it with a smile. He'll still welcome us into his home when we go to Evanston, and he'll still have a place for us at his table. And he'll know we're kidding. Bill always knows we're kidding.

Well, we repeat, the opportunity is here. We've waited a long time, we've thought deeply, and we've discarded all the old ideas, tossed out all our knowledge, summed up our "experience" into a "period of years" and piled it all on the head of a pin—and found that there's plenty of room for more! And the next few years are going to be extremely interesting as we go about learning new things, dreaming new dreams, putting down in words what science fiction really is and can *never* be defined by those words. Because once defined, it no longer is science fiction — just knowledge, and like all knowledge, already outmoded, being pushed off the human scene by new knowledge, the pressure of "things to come."

So, if you ask us what science fiction is, all we can say is that we don't know, because the science fiction you'll read in *Other Worlds* in future issues just hasn't happened yet. But one thing we *can* say, is that when it happens, it won't be the *same old thing*. Ya hear that, Bill old boy? It won't be "old hat", like the kind of thing you think the writers ought to turn out! It won't be trite. And how do you expect a writer to write with fire and spirit, interested in what he's doing, and proud of the result, if you impose that horrible restriction on him: he must be trite!

No, Bill, science fiction isn't all the things you said it was. It's all the things it *will be*. And it WILL be, because we're dreaming dreams again, building castles in the air, peering eagerly into the unknown. And we want our readers to peer with us.

It will be a very wonderful adventure! —*Rap.*

LETTERS

Address:
Editor
Other Worlds
P.O. Box 56, Sta. V
Cincinnati 10, Ohio

Dear Rap:

So you want imagination!

Do you really think that the authors who have been writing the "mind-probing and sociological" type of a science-fiction for the past few years and getting from 2c to 3½c per word, are going to type their fingers to the bone to get extra wordage to sell a story to OTHER WORLDS at ½c per word? Hah!

Any resemblance to OTHER WORLDS #32 and any other issues is purely titulary. Maybe you just don't get the material. Could that be it?

With all my gibes, I'd still like to see you hit the top!

Alan Cheuse
154 Lewis St.
Perish Amboy, N. J.

The question you ask in the second paragraph of your letter can be answered with just one word: yes. All stf authors will not flock to us with their stories, naturally; but the authors who write science-fiction because they agree with Rap's statements in this issue's editorial will be sending in material. Why? At the recent Midwest Conference, I was talking with some of these authors, and their replies fell into two general categories: those who said they'd be glad to lend a helping hand by accepting lower rates for the present, and those who said (and this is almost a direct quote) "I'm tired of tailoring a story to an editor, it'll be a relief to write what I want to for a change." Science-fiction writers are a funny lot aren't they, when you stop to realize that they're likely to write a story just because they like writing science-fiction, and sell it at reduced rates just to help out a friend. — Bea

Dear RAP (or Bea):

Congratulations on the excellence of your last few issues of Universe! I've been an avid reader of science fiction since 1949, and your mag is now approaching closely (if not actually equalling) the apparent (from all I read) leaders — "Astounding" "Galaxy" and "The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction."

I have read almost all the copies of "Other Worlds" that were issued, and all issues of "Science Stories" and "Universe," and I am pleased to say that you have never put out a better issue than that for September!

My one complaint about the late issues is this: I definitely prefer colored covers to the uncolored photos used on the November and January issues. If it is possible, I should like to have color resumed — but I'd rather you continued the photos than go broke and out of publication!

If your press of business ever gives you the time, I should like to see an editorial to answer the following questions (just to satisfy my curiosity): 1). Why did "Other Worlds" go out of business if you still had the money to put out "Science Stories"? 2). Why did "Science Stories" go out of publication? 3). Why has RAP given up most of his work on the magazine (I certainly hope it's not that old back injury)? 4). Why do you say in the November issue that the uncolored covers are designed to appeal to the "Time" crowd, and then turn around and say in the January issue that the "boom" is over and that "science fiction" is for the 2%? 5). Why do you say on page 6 of the January issue that "Universe" is the leading s. f. magazine, and then on page 122 say that you're not trying to lead the field? 6.) Don't you think you're being a little too hard on "Imagination," "Galaxy," "The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction," "If" and "Amazing" when you hint that they are just "also-rans" because their editors didn't enter the field back in the twenties?

If I seem overly critical in my comments above, it's just that I'm one of the 2% and feel that I have a stake in the future of all the magazines I like. Forgive me? Please?

I'd like to put in a vote for more editorials on the past, present, and future operations of "Universe." I like to feel that I know what's going on in the mag's home — why changes were made (or why not), why certain stories were chosen, and what the future plans for the magazine are (I guess my questions listed above

show that).

I hope that "Universe" can weather the storm where the other Palmer mags couldn't; it's too good a magazine to die off. Perhaps I should explain here that — while I buy every issue as it comes out — I'm a college student on a limited budget, and can't seem to get the money together all at once to subscribe. If things get desperate, why not ask all the loyal fans to go out and get some new subscribers so that they can continue to get their favorite magazine? After all, if we really like the mag we should be willing to do something for it! (I've already started *my* campaign for more readers).

Ray has been an s. f. editor for a long time and it would be a shame to have him quit now — I hope the setbacks he's had haven't discouraged him! (I assume that Bea will be reading this.)

Well, here's a toast — long live "Universe," RAP, and Bea!

Darrell Rains
387 S. 1st St.
San Jose, Calif.

Bea sent this letter to us, and asked us to answer it, because Darrell said we contradicted ourselves. Well, you've heard of the man who never contradicted himself, haven't you, Darrell? He had a huge reference library, and he never said anything, or answered a question, until he had consulted his library. And because he had the biggest reference library in the world, nobody could ever trip him up; if they went referencing, they could only succeed in confirming him statements. We feel a great pity for that man. We wouldn't have a reference library if our lives depended upon it. We wouldn't admit that we couldn't risk thinking for ourselves. We wouldn't hesitate to make any statement at all, on the grounds that it might contradict another. But the truth of the matter is that we aren't contradictory, we merely like to demonstrate that there are two sides to any story, and many times we confuse our listeners by telling both stories in the same breath. Maybe we have fun that way!

But to answer your question: 1. *OW didn't go out of business— we simply hid it under a new title. We didn't have money to go on with Science Stories, we tricked the printers into financing us. (We paid them later, of course!— and are still paying some of them!)* 2. *Science Stories went out because it failed.* 3. *We didn't give up most of our work on the magazines, because we actually never did much work on it— we learned long ago that other minds were better than our own, and we al-*

lowed them to express themselves. That's how we got a reputation for being "clever" editors. As for our old back injury, we now have a partial paralysis to add to it but it sure doesn't hinder us in our work! In fact, it helps by keeping us willing to sit at the typewriter longer each day. 4. We didn't say we wanted to appeal to the Time crowd, did we? Only that such covers were used on Time, and were more "respectable," and might appeal to the Time crowd . . . Sure the boom is over, and sf for the 2%. But we can't let our rivals know our thinking until it is too late for them! Can we? 5. *We say what we think, and now we think differently—now it's OTHER WORLDS that is the best magazine . . . in our opinion! And who else's opinion counts against our own! Aren't we human, like everybody else? Aren't we proud of our OWN magazine, and inclined to favor it a bit? Sure we're not trying to lead the field. We are trying to lead the thinking, the ideation, of science-fiction, not the "field" in the sense of making the most money.* 6. *Why shouldn't we be hard on Galaxy, etc? Did they ever do anything for us, except provide unwanted competition! And isn't an editor who didn't enter the field back in the twenties an "also-ran" in respect to "years"?*

Glad you are one of the 2%! You'll have fun reading OTHER WORLDS in the future, then! As for editorials, how do you like the one in this issue? It certainly tells what we are planning for the future! Why, we're planning on so many things! A bigger magazine, better stories, new ideas, unusual things.

Okay, Darrell, long live Universe, may she rest in peace! Viva la OTHER WORLDS! And don't think we aren't going right on editing!—Rap.

Dear RAP,

Dammit, will you do one of the following three things, please:

1) Shut your yap some several thousand poorly chosen words sooner than you have in the last two ishs you've pubbed, or

2) Stop pubbing on the front cover the names of yarns (and their authors) that get left out because you yak too much, or

3) Add 30 pages to OW so you can yak yak and still include all the yarns listed on front cover.

Seriously tho, it is rather annoying, to say the least, to read that OW is running a story by a guy you know and like (SVEN, by old CinFan Lou Tabakow) and then find that it didn't make it becuz the editor got carried away by the

sound of his typewriter. I refer here to ye editorial as well as your answer to the one letter. Your story I read and got a chuckle out of — which is more than I can say for that Atomic Age Sex Murders or whatever it was, that smelled up the last Universe.

As for your remarks about forthcoming issues, new and greater things, a "new look" as you put it, frankly I've heard this sort of stuff before and nothing has happened. I shall, therefore, eat some cheese and wait with baited breath to see if anything happens this time.

And if you want to go back to "plotting" Shaver yarns, go ahead. I'm not afraid to say that I enjoyed his "mystery"— as long as no one was trying to make me believe it was real. And you'll have to admit that you did your damndest to make it real. And those letters you used to print! What ever happened to all those screwballs? If you could get half of them over to MYSTIC you'd be made. (Down, Dero, down boy I say!)

Frankly I have hopes for the "new" OW. I like the zine, and not simply becuz you once bought some stuff of mine either. You have a fresh outlook, a "Let's-deflate-the-STUFFED-SHIRTS" attitude that I like. Now you just cut out all the extraneous crap and edit us a good zine. And Bea, you kick him in the head every now and then to keep him on the right track. And if that doesn't work, hide his fishing gear.

And don't let Rog get away— him I like. You just can't hardly find guys like him no more.

George W. Earley
932 Wethersfield Ave, Apt 5
Hartford 14, Conn

Dear George: Our problems are simple, we can't maintain a large inventory, so we buy just what stories we think will fit in the issue. We never hit it exactly, and sometimes we're short, in which case I have to "yak" as you put it, and in others, we're over, and we have to leave out the story that doesn't fit. So, it isn't the yakking which shoves the stories out, but it is the length of the stories that determines it! You see, other way around! Sometimes the stories will shove the yakking out. Your editor plans to write some good stories shortly. He's got to. Can't afford to buy as many. But seriously, we intend to try. Trouble is, we don't do well except on longer lengths. And we're out of practice, after so many years. As for our "new look," maybe. Even with this issue. As we told you in the "yakatorial," we're trying to meet deadlines with surprises, and maybe we'll make it. If not, well,

next issue . . . We are going to try to plot some for Shaver. He's not working right now, and maybe he'll find time to write for nothing! Brother, what a comedown from ZD days! We used to have $50,000.00 *inventory to pick from, now we are begging stories from authors. Goes to prove what a sap we really are! But doggone it, we're going to start all over, as a true fan, and lover of science fiction, and see what we can do. We've got some really good help. Our wife works like a dog on clerical stuff, thus relieving us to do editorial work, and Bea handles the entire editing and production of the magazine, and all in all, it's a family affair, just like Bill Hamling and his wife, Frances, who work in their knotty-pine paneled basement. We work in our unheated attic! Did I ever tell you about the time the deros tried to kill me . . . Aw shucks, who believes that! What we want is more good Shaver fiction, and we're gonna get it! Rog Phillips, too, if we can get him to wait seven years to get paid! Willya, Rog? Fishing, why George, I haven't had time to dip a hook in nearly a year! And it burns me up, too, because I can see the fish jumping from my window! We'll try to keep our editorials to size, but you know how we like to yak!—Rap.*

Dear Rap and Bea,

I was browsing around the local newsstand, when something glaringly yellow caught my eye; I looked closely, and lo and behold, it was none other than OW. Real classy looking, With my letter, yet. Thanks. You should never encourage me, tho; I just keep writing.

I'll comment on both issues of the new OW this time 11: The green and violet on the cover was eye-catching, to say the least. The fact that Finlay was again in b & w made for much gnashing of teeth in the Gardner household. All of the stories were readable with Sturgeon's standing out. It was offtrail, even for him, but I liked it. Yours, Rap, was the worst of the bunch. The CLUBHOUSE was great, as usual, and the rest of the features good.

And now to 12: One of the best looking fronts I've seen on any mag. You mentioned that the bacover would probably be a reprint but you didn't say the front one would be, too. Good anyhoo. As for the stories, yours was fair, so was Smith's and the Causey thing was terrible. NARKEETA was the kind of story I don't often like, but this one rang a bell. Let's see more of her work. Power's story was fairly good, and Bloch . . . . well, it was a Bloch tale, and

that's good enough for me.

You did more to justify yourself to me in the answer to Brunner's letter than you have in all the preceding ones. As to UNIVERSE's bad sales, all I can say is it warn't me; I bought every ish. And you'll have my $5 sub as soon as I can rake the money together.

General opinion of the two issues; improving all the time. Keep it up, and you'll have me groveling at your feet for the harsh words I spoke in the July ish. Best of luck to you and OW

. . .

Barry Gardner
Box 201,
Deport, Texas

Keep watching us, because we're going to keep on improving. We've got some terrific stories lined up for the next few issues, and more in the works. We'll even see what can be done about giving you those Finlay covers in color. 'More and better everything,' is our motto from now on. —Bea

Dear Mr. Palmer,

Though I have been reading your magazine (s) since 1950, I have never written before . . . content just to read the stories and enjoy them. I know almost nothing about science, in general, and my interest has been mostly in the humanistic, broadening and imaginative aspect of most of your stories. In this, I suppose I am not a typical "fan," though I'm sure you have many readers like me.

The main reason I am addressing this to you, Mr. Palmer, is because I have just finished reading your wonderful editorial in the March issue of Universe, It is all true, too true . . .and how seldom you read anything like it except in your magazine. The remarkable thing was your idea about the scientists having a place in the government, and a little freedom to speak for themselves to all of us. I'll admit to having had a bit of anger towards them for what I thought of as a typically cold, inhumanly objective outlook, but perhaps that was because I thought of them as more powerful in every way than they are. Of course, my anger at them never reached the peak it does at the morning paper where there is always some politican willing to sacrifice everything for pride, or his own gain.

Perhaps what I wish to say now may sound sloppy, and I should probably never say it if this were cold, clear morning, instead of hazy midnight; but I have thought a lot about these things, and knowing I must be one of a large group (young mothers with young

children) what I have to say may be of some value in understanding.

My husband was in the invasion (Normandy), wounded fighting in France, and is now teaching Math in high school. We were married in '51 and have a little boy, now nearly two years old. I was 15 when the war ended, and thought I understood it (World war 2). As I looked at the pictures of Buchenwald, read the horrors in the papers, saw the pictures of the young soldiers who had died, and even, later, heard my husband tell about the fighting in France, how his whole group (except a few) were blown up by a defective shell on a truck they were near, I was shocked, horrified, and I think, sympathetic . . . . However, I know now, I had no empathy. It was not me, not my own body, and therefore somewhat foreign, and I could stand it.

My empathy came with pregnancy and increased with the birth of my son. Along with my love and responsibility to my child, I began to feel responsible to him for the world he would have to live in. When he first lay beside me in the hospital, so perfect and new, I felt a cold pain through me, a protest that he should ever feel hurt, or disappointed, or alone . . . and that feeling increased until it covered every infant, then every child, every old person, then all people and animals and their babies, until I could never feel objective about taking any life, for any reason again. Now, I watch my little boy dance and play, and run up to me for a hug . . . so joyous about being alive, about Spring, about the black kitty next door, and I think of all the other little children all over the world, some of them are crying, some are hungry and some have no one to love them, which is the worst thing of all . . . and war is the cause of much of this . . . . and much of this is the cause of war! I think that those who want war have not had love . . . perhaps that is why they've pushed so hard for power, or what they think is respect. Some of them may even have children of their own, but I say that they can not really love their own children if they would kill another child anywhere.

Is it love for a man to kill the new born baby of his neighbor, because he has an argument with him, and then go home and cuddle his own child and tell it how lucky it is to be safe, and isn't it glad it's living in his house instead of the man next door's? It reminds me of all the speeches on the radio that Thanksgiving when we were still at war in Korea . . . and on television . . . first showing

pictures of beaten, starving people, and crying orphaned babies, and then the announcer saying, in soothing tones, "How much we have to be thankful for, it isn't happening here . . . and, Fight in Korea so we don't fight in the streets of Witchita, Kansas' . . . I'm not arguing with the military strategy, whatever that is, but I failed to see ANYTHING to be thankful for, and got so angry I nearly blew up. Where anyone in all the world is dying, hungry, or alone it is all our responsibility.

Each child that is born has a right to peace and understanding, food, shelter, freedom to create, and above all, to be really wanted for himself and whatever he may be.

The world, as it stands now, is rejecting its children, and that is insanity and what can lead to our extinction. The many who can love are mostly silent, and the bitter few are shouting louder and louder all the time in their hate.

I know I haven't expressed myself as well as I wish I could have, but your writers are doing a much clearer job, and you are doing the best of all. Thank you . . . . . .

Morgen Spanogel
609 Canary St.
Dunkirk, N. Y.

For my part, I don't see how you could have expressed yourself more clearly or more sincerely. If you have been, or ever are, bitten by the science-fiction-fantasy writing bug, I would certainly like to see some of your work. With your ability to say what you want to say, plus the outlook expressed in your letter, any stories you wrote would undoubtedly be warm and appealing. I agree completely and wholeheartedly with what you say, and from conversations with Rap, I know he does, also. It's about time that the people who Love tried to speak above those who Hate. This is why, outmoded as we may be, we want stories where the "good guys" win, and where, when you reach one goal you find it's only a step along the road to an even greater goal. This may have been your first letter to us, but don't let it be the last. —Bea

Dear Bea &/ or Rap,

Funny, I correspond with the writer of one of the letters of criticism you've recently published and this person denounces Rap for stupidity in allowing his mag (s) to deteriorate from the best to a mediocre type. Said that the "boom" shouldn't've hit you any worse than the others (meaning *aSF, GSF.* and that no editor should continually improve his

mag with higher rates, backcovers, better illoes & paper, etc. unless he has a fat $ cushion. This same person is denouncing you for poor stories, noncolor covers, poor paper and whatnot.

The foregoing is to show how fickle fandom is.

As long as you're reprinting covers, why not reprint Myshkin, a story from same ish as your last cover? I had a terrible time reading the thing and gave up on account of smallness of type—eye trouble. Please don't use small type on this coming short novel. My eyes function well under a short period of strain, but tend to tire after 5,000 or so words of that size type; besides, you'll be able to fill more space and make mag costs less and get onto a healthy standard that much speedier.

You know, I can't reconcile desire for SHORT stories with the traits an avid reader should have. Certainly, if you have a masterpiece, he might on occasion prefer it, but it appears to me that the person who enjoys reading would prefer the longer type which more depends on technique than on gimmicks. Glad to see you're not to label 7 page stories as "novelettes" and 16 pagers as "novels".

"Narkeeta" was fine, as close to a literary piece as you've published in some time. I can't picture those desperados using perfect English, though. Seems t'me 'at they'd be continually using contractions. "The Coward" wasn't too wonderful. Rather weak even for a gimmick (or do you call 'em "twists"?). "I'll Tell My Big Brother" was a typically Palmerish yarn done at a dogtrot on the way to the office where the deadline must be met. "Where The Buffalo Roam" would be mistaken for Palmer easily and same comment as above is applicable. THE CLUB HOUSE was best of mag.

Ed Luksus
3717 Johnson
Gary, Indiana

We won't be re-printing covers any longer than is absolutely necessary, and as for reprinting stories— not as long as we can get material as fine as the novel we're beginning in the next issue. No, it's not a serial, even though it's much to long to run complete in one issue. We're presenting it as a trilogy, each story complete in itself. It's great, stupendous, and magnificent! ! ! In fact, it's a really terrific yarn, and set in standard size type for the benefit of everybody's eyes, especially mine. You think you suffered from Myshkin's *small type; I almost went blind after proof-reading it a couple of times—Bea*

Dear RAP:

Please forget anything I've written before about OTHER WORLDS; it's at the bottom of the heap, now.

Honestly, Ray, is this the best ol' RAP can do? It's nothing like the OW of '53. Either give us color covers, or eliminate the cover painting entirely, as did Campbell's UNKNOWN, in 1940.

I won't review the stories in the May ish, as this part of a Palmer mag has always been the least important to me. The reason I read the old OW, Science Stories, and Universe, was for the features: Editorials, Personals, Letters, Man from Tomorrow (this last rated lowest with me), and the others that appeared from time to time.

Of the present OW features, the best is Rog Phillips' "The Club House." Rog's column was a favorite in Amazing, and it looks like it'll become tops in OW, too. The letters appear about the same, but the old RAP fire is gone from the editorials. If you can't do any better than this, Ray, let Bea handle the Eds.

In this ish, you discuss the idea of achieving success by publishing stories about things that couldn't happen. This sounds interesting, but I think that OTHER WORLDS will be a happier mag if you go back to the old "no policy" stand that made the old OW tops in any fan's book.

I've had my say, but I'll be back again after the July ish hits the stands.

FANtastically yours,
John G. Trimble
2450 Easy Ave.
Long Beach 10, Calif

Now with this third issue of the new OW, are we still on the bottom of the heap? We've got the color covers you wanted, front and back. They're reprints, it's true, but we'll remedy that as soon as possible. We've got the old OW features, and if you think the fire is gone from Rap's editorials, take a look at the current one. Our editorial policy is, was, and will continue to be "no policy" meaning that, within the limits of decency and good taste, we'll publish all types of science-fiction and fantasy. C'mon, now, John, we know we haven't reached the top of the heap yet, but we're not really at the bottom, are we?—Bea

THE CLUB HOUSE

By Rog Phillips

SO there I sat, well fed, using Harlan Ellison's pipe as an ash tray while his attention was engaged elsewhere. Harlan was trading one of his dishes of orange sherbet for a dish of mint sherbet. Across from me sat Larry Shaw and Frank Robinson, who had not yet discovered that I had stolen their banquet tickets. On my left sat the most beautiful girl in Bellefontaine (now that Bea had returned to Cincinnati to mascot a Sunday ball team, I hastily add to keep from getting fired) by the name of Phyllis Scott. It was for her that I had stolen the extra ticket.

In another half hour the two or three hundred of us would convene over at the Hotel Ingals for the final show, where Bob Bloch, in his unequaled style, would introduce the notables with appropriate insults. He was to introduce me with the most uninsulting speech of his career, and I was to get sweet revenge a few moments after that with a most subtle word trap. But right now I was relaxed, enjoying the near presence of Phyllis, waiting for Harlan to discover the ashes and cigarette stubs jammed into his pipe, and waiting for Larry Shaw and Frank Robinson to discover that their tickets were missing.

Across the room at the other fifty foot long table— or rather hovering over it — was a little pink cloud, and under it, sitting close together, were Joe Gibson and Roberta Collins who had just become engaged a few days before.

Someone with a polaroid camera who had taken a picture of Phyllis and me interrupted my thoughts by bringing the finished picture. Harlan, gorged with sherbet, screamed his discovery of his desecrated pipe. Larry Shaw began accusing Frank Robinson of swiping his banquet ticket.

About the room chairs scraped as people prepared to leave. The spell of the moment was broken forever, to be replaced by other and better spells, perhaps, but never to return.

The Sixth Annual Midwestcon was almost over.

In another three hours Phyllis Scott would wave goodbye to me from the rear window of the car driven by Sam Moskowitz as it picked up speed on its long journey back to New York. Shortly after that I would get behind the wheel of Roger's de Soto, loaded down with Joe and Roberta, Bob Briney, Sidney Coleman and Jon Stopa and begin the trek back to Chicago.

But that is the way of these fan conventions. This one was June 11th and 12th. Almost before this can hit the stands the biggest convention of them all, the one at Cleveland over Labor Day, will be here, and most of the same people, plus many hundreds more will again be together. Noreen and Nick Falasca and Honey Wood and other officials of the 13th World Science Fiction Convention were there, telling us the details of progress in convention planning. Dave Kyle and Sam Moskowitz from New York were there, telling us of New York's hopes of getting the 1956 convention. Joe Gibson was there too, but since he is moving to Chicago right away he will perhaps be out of New York affairs. He made the mistake of dropping in on me on a vacation trip to New Mexico. That was just three weeks ago. He was single, footloose, and carefree. Then he met Roberta. But they make a fine couple. Who knows? Maybe, as the years pass, they will bring into the world a few more Rog Phillips fans . . .

Harlan Ellison hadn't sent me a copy of the new issue of DIMENSIONS yet. Since I have to turn in my column this week and the Midwestcon was last weekend, he loaned me his file copy to use for review, and I am to return it to him in New York right away; so I will review it first on the list.

DIMENSIONS: 25c; Harlan Ellison, 12701 Shaker Blvd., Apt. 616, Cleveland 20, Ohio. He's moved to New York. Come to think of it, how will I send him this file copy of his fanzine without his New York address? You will be able to get your copy by using the Ohio address, because his mail will be forwarded. Harlan's fanzine has ninety pages. That's forty-five sheets mimeographed on both sides. It weighs six ounces. The 25c you send him for a copy can't possibly pay for the postage, paper, ink, and mimeo masters, no matter how those costs are spread out. Even if this zine were poorly done you could not help getting more than your money's worth. But it is in every sense of the word one of the finest fanzines ever put

out by anyone. Many of the pages have two color illos. Some of the pages must have taken more than a day's work for each individual page.

Of course, Harlan did not turn this fanzine out singlehanded. Production aides are listed as Bill Dignin and Sally Dunn. The front cover, "Remnant" by Alan Hunter is in lithograph. The back cover, "The Prophet of Doom" is by Robert Mowry on Stenafax stencil. The contents page is a Who's Who of the best fan and pro writers and artists. and every possible facet of fan writing finds expression in its pages. No other single issue of any fanzine ever published could give you so much that it is truly representative of the best of fan accomplishment.

For example, there is "Songs From Deep Space," eight wonderful pages in two color art, which is a special section of the classic science fiction ballads by Algis Budrys, Theodore R. Cogswell, Julian May Dikty, Phyllis H. Economou, and Theodore Sturgeon. Julian May (Judy) Dikty's "Tit-Willow" which I have heard her sing many times is one of them. The artwork by Robert Athearn on these pages is out of this world.

I'm going to stop right there. It would take all the space allotted to the CLUB HOUSE in *Other Worlds* to review Harlan Ellison's magazine. It would take a full week to read this zine, and read it again, discovering all the hundreds of things I missed on the first reading. I'm going to make a special request: please don't send for this fanzine unless you are a real fan. There can't be enough copies to go around. A mimeograph doesn't make that many. So please don't buy it if you are just idly interested in fan publications.

THE NEO FAN'S GUIDE: free, but none available. You can get a copy next year by requesting it by *postcard* for convenience in filing your address NOW; Bob Tucker, Box 702, Bloomington, Ill. Fern Tucker was at the Bellefontaine meet too. I guess her husband was around someplace. She says he writes stories under such high sounding pseudonyms as Wilson Tucker. Bob Tucker is most famous for the temporary but intense waves of joy his many rumored but unfortunately untrue demises have created from time to time. If I remember correctly, Astounding or some such magazine or other once published a eulogy of the Late Bob Tucker. Bob Tucker's greatest literary efforts have been his letters to Bob Bloch, some of whch are scheduled, I believe, for publication in the next issue of Harlan Ellison's DIMEN-

SIONS. When not dead, nor writing letters to Bob Bloch, nor doing housework for Fern, nor writing what passes for a best seller mystery novel or stf story, he can be found in his garage turning out fanzines such as the present one, which really isn't a fanzine at all, but an unabridged nine page compendium of fanish terms which I find to be both accurate and complete.

At Bellefontaine there was, of course, a full contingent of fans from Indiana. Tacked to the door of a hotel room just down the hall from my own was a fanzine called

MERLIN: 5c; Lee Anne Tremper, 1022 N. Tuxedo St., Indianapolis 1, Ind. The door was partly open so I peeked in. Peeking out at me with equal furtiveness was a twenty-one year old, five foot six inch, somewhat bashful blonde pointing what seemed at first glance to be a weapon at me. Before I could retreat there was a blinding flash. I recovered consciousness sometime later in a far corner of this hotel room, with this blonde partially crushed under me. Her camera, for that was what had caused the flash, had been rescued by Jean Bogert, who now proceeded to rescue the next most precious (to her) article, the blonde. To my surprise the blonde turned out to be a first grade school teached named Lee Anne Tremper. To cover my embarrassment I threatened dire things if she did not send me a copy of the picture, and she promised. Encouraged, I invited her and Jean to have lunch. Dan Curán of New York joined the party. After lunch we wandered over to the Hotel Ingals where Lee introduced me to to a very nice looking young man whose name I've forgotten, who seemed to be her escort. I think it was Dave Jenrette. Shortly I was being introduced to the rest of the Indiana fans, all of whom, it seems, publish or help publish a fanzine. However if you are an Indiana science fiction reader and would like to get acquainted with other Indiana fans, I can think of no pleasanter way to begin than by sending for Lee's fanzine, MERLIN. To be serious for a moment, MERLIN is a very nice fanzine. You will enjoy reading it if you send for it.

EISFA: 5c; Robert and Juanita Coulson, 616 Court St., Huntington, Ind. This is more of a clubzine, though still for general interest circulation, Bob and Juanita and others of the Eastern Indiana Science Fiction Association were also at the Midwestcon. If you want to get acquainted with this group, club meetings are held in Muncie, and information about

meetings can be obtained from Delray Green, Rt. 4, Muncie, Ind. There's a nice little story by Hal Anna in the May issue. "Love Across Time."

ISFA: 15c; Edward McNulty, 5645 N. Winthrop St., Indianapolis, Ind. Names on the contents page take in most of the Indiana fans. This is the big annish, with 52 pages. Plenty of artwork, five stories, plenty of articles and regular features.

OOPSLA: 15c; Gregg Calkins, 2817 Eleventh St., Santa Monica, Calif., Gregg seems to corner the best of fan writing quite consistently. Walt Willis, in "The Harp That Once or Twice" continues his account of his trip from Chicago to California in my car together with the Ackermans and other persons, this time relating certain thrilling experiences in the forests of the Grand Canyon country, where he was attacked by a wild piano. I remember that piano myself. It was way out in the woods at some picnic grounds, and in good condition.

PSYCHOTIC: 20c; Richard Geis, 2631 N. Mississippi, Portland 12, Ore . . . One free sample copy will be sent to anyone who sends Dick his name and address, so you can skip the 20c if you wish; but after all, you can spare the 20c, so why make him foot the bill as well as do all the work? You won't regret getting this always humorous and well put together fanzine. Many of the people who put on the Portland convention way back in 1950 are still around, in the pages of this zine.

INSIDE: 25c Ron and Cindy Smith, who now live in New York at Apt. 407, 510 W. 113th St., New York 25, N. Y. . . The fan and editor "feud" concerning pro-editor policy on stories continues with articles by Bill Freeman and Mark Clifton. Clifton, I think, has more of the answer as to what's wrong with stf today than Bill Hamling. This is a fanzine you will want to subscribe to once you've seen a copy. It has probably the highest circulation of any fanzine. Photo-offset it's artwork is seldom equaled.

FANTASY-TIMES: 10c; Fandom House, P. O. Box 2331, Paterson 23, N. J. . The newspaper of stf happenings everywhere, published twice a month. Practically every fan is a subscriber, just as most people get a daily newspaper, and the new robot addresser they have acquired makes it possible for them to take on any number of subscribers. It has been in publication for fourteen years. You get things you would never learn about elsewhere. In F-T even the

editors of the prozines let down their hair!

HARK 4: 10c; Randy Brown, 6619 Anita St., Dallas 14, Texas. Randy is coming along fine with his publishing, and this issue is as good as any real fanzine usually gets unless its editor has a lot of money to spend. Three different colors of mimeo paper, plenty of artwork on stencil, sixteen pages, plenty of letters in the letter department, and some good stuff. As Don Allen says in his letter in its readers' column, HARK has a nice atmosphere.

NITECRY: 10c; Don Chappell, 5921 E. 4th Place, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Official fanzine of the Oklahoma crowd. "Smoke Signals" by Dan McPhail continues the fascinating resurrection of old stf history. Don Chappell in his editorial replies to Vernon McCain in his column in Oopsla who takes him to task on his ideas about young and old fans. Stories and reviews make up most of the contents.

Long before you read this the Oklacon will be past history. I was invited to speak at this convention, but unfortunately I couldn't make it over the July 4th weekend. Leigh Brackett, who is to be their speaker, was at the Midwestcon with her hubby, Edmond Hamilton.

PEON: 20c; Charles Lee Riddle PNCA, USN, P. O. Box 611, New London, Conn. This new address is because he has been reassigned again. He is a navy officer. When Peon first appeared, he was in Hawaii. This is the May issue of Peon, commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first fanzine, which was published by no less than Ray Palmer himself! It also marks the eighth year for Peon. So it's a special issue. Harlan Ellison, T. E. Watkins, Terry Carr, Henry Moscowitz, Bob Bloch, and others, including myself, are on the contents page. My contribution is a reprint of a humorous bit I did for FAPA or Dream Quest or something back in 1947.

In "Night Vigil," Harlan Ellison has written a story in which he confesses ahead of time to the reader that there is a flaw. He says, "It was intentionally placed in the story, else there could not have been a story." I disagree with him on his premise that the flaw was necessary. There are half a dozen ways the story could have been built without a flaw, and been stronger. What do others of you who read it think? And, Harlan, now that the story is cold, can you think of a way?

TYPO #2: 20c; Kent Corey, 306 E. Hickory, Enid, Oklahoma.

Printed on an $800 multilith for which he paid fifty dollars, he says. Not being Sherlock Holmes, it looks like mimeography to me. A twenty page, well rounded zine with plenty of humor. For example, "The case of the Female Centipede or, 2,000 Legs Under The She." Lynn Hickman is listed as co-editor. Lynn and his wife were at the Midwestcon. I hadn't seen them in years. He was active in the Little Monsters clubs that sprung up a few years back. In fact, I believe he started the Little Monster movement, and at one time I was an honorary little monster myself.

ECLIPSE: 10c; Ray Thompson, 410 S. 4th St., Norfolk, Nebraska. As Dave Mason points out in a letter in the readers column of this zine, Ray could do a lot better at typing his stencils. Also there happens to be a Dave Mason story in this issue. At the Midwestcon Dan Curan told me Dave Mason had remarked that I must have holes in my head to have said a recent story of Dave's in Peon was good. I told Dan to inform Dave that I hadn't read the story I had only reviewed it — which was probably the truth. The letter column seems to talk about another fanzine, BIBBLETY, rather than ECLIPSE. I have a copy of BIBBLETY in the stack for review, with the letter column having letters about ECLIPSE. Very confusing to a reviewer.

OBLIQUE: 50c; Clifford I. Gould, 1559 Cable St., San Diego 7, California. "Circulation this issue is slightly over 100, all trades are welcome." It has me curious. But since he says a sample copy will be sent on request, it won't cost you anything to take a look at it. 28 pages, good, but not spectacular. I think Cliff's really only wanting trades, because what fan would pay half a buck for one fanzine?

TACITUM: 10c; Benny Sodek 1415 S. Marsalis, Dallas 16 Texas. Randy Brown is assistant editor, so automatically this is a good fanzine. You'll like these mimeographed jobs with several different colors of paper, homemade artwork, and the spirit that comes only from having real fun doing fan publishing. There are two issues of Tacitum already, so maybe a third one will be ready by the time you read this and send for one.

CRY OF THE NAMELESS: no price listed, Box 267, 920 Third Ave., Seattle 4, Washington. The official organ of the Nameless Ones, which is the active fanclub of the state of Washington. If you live there, by all means contact this group. They've been active a long time, and I know many of

them from seeing them at conventions. Nothing in it of general interest to the newcomer, but certainly worth getting if you are already an actifan and want to keep up on what's cooking on the west coast.

FEMIZINE: 35c; Eva Firestone, Box 515, Upton, Wyoming, who is merely the agent for this all femme zine from Scotland England, and other far parts. Mastermind — or should I say mistressmind? — of this publication is spinster punster Joan W. Carr who doesn't carr to what lengths she ghost in her waist of tumm. If you want to read funny things written by gals with names like Ethel Lindsay, Pamela Bulmer, Madeline Willis, Francis Evans, Daphne Buckmaster, etc., this is what you're looking for. Wittiest bit in the two issues on hand is entitled, "Frightfully Jolly Music-Hall Song for 2054," with the first stanza:

I'm a BEM, I'm a BEM,
It's a very hard life you'll agree.
For a BEM, for a BEM
There are reasons for sadness, you see.
For there's no way of telling the hes from the shes,
We all have stalked eyebrows and knobbly knees,
And you can't get romantic when you're in a deep freeze.
Not a BEM, not a BEM.

I take it back. I take it back. That was not the wittiest. America remains TRIUMPHANT! Bob Bloch's eleven year old daughter, Sally Ann Bloch, outwits the witses of Glasgow with a letter in the letter column. A little child shall lead them . . .

ALPHA: 60c; USA representative, Dick Ellington, 113 W. 84th St., Apt. 51E, New York 24, N. Y. who, by the way, can locate any fanzine anywhere for you in case you don't know the address. Dick's name and address is a good one to write down somewhere in case you want to subscribe to any fanzine. ALPHA is the only fanzine I receive for review that is published on the European continent itself. It comes from Belgium, I believe. Jan Jansen and Dave Vendelmans know their American language better than I do, so don't be afraid of it. Dean A. Grennell of Wisconsin has an article in it. Joan Carr of Femizine has a letter in it opining the Alpha's letter column is its most interesting part. It is in one respect, because it has letters from every country where stf flowers.

GASP: no price listed; Gerald A. Steward, 166 McRoberts Ave., Toronto 10, Ontario. This issue bemoans the "fact" that there is no controversy raging in fandom at present, fandim is dying, fans for

the past year have shown no talent. Whattayaknow! The author of the article is Harlan Ellison. He gets more places than Bugs Bunny. If he ever gets bored it will be from supersonic dumdums rather than from lack of controversy. Dick Ellington, Richard Geis, Bob Bloch, Redd Boggs and others have letters in it.

CANADIAN FANDOM #24; 15c William D. Grant, 11 Burton Rd., Toronto 10, Ontario. Twelfth year of publication, and during the years I have read it it has kept its high quality of reproduction and contents. Dean Grennell's article, "Past and Present," is very thought provoking—something unusual in any zine, fan or pro these days. It compares, ostensibly, the old *Unknown* with the modern fantasy magazines, especially Horace Gold's *Beyond*. His contention is that though the writers that appeared in *Unknown* are still largely with us, they can no longer write as they used to. The old Ted Sturgeon is gone, he says, and the old Horace Gold, and the old Heinlein.

To some extent he is right, but I think that in a very basic sense his article, and all such analyses of "what is wrong with stf and fantasy today" have missed the point just a most editors have missed the boat.

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MYSTIC readers, watch this ad next month, and every month, for more testimonials. When Ray Palmer says a thing's good, he knows it's good! And if you have any hair trouble at all, get on the ball. Get

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And Tell Him Ray Sent You

Take Weird Tales. It was a prestige magazine. Big name writers would rather appear in that magazine at half a cent a word than in Astounding at three cents, and would work harder on a story for Weird. But it had a rigid theory and history of the superstitions of the ages, from which it would not deviate. The stories which had once been spine chilling became monotonous. Have you ever read Lovecraft a second time? Something was gone from his writings on the second reading. Eventually all stories in Weird Tales had lost their emotion-creating power — except for the new reader, and there weren't enough new readers coming into the field.

A couple of years ago I looked through an index of stf and fantasy. It was cross-indexed as to plot, subject, and gimmick. I was dismayed at the realization that it is almost impossible to write a new stf or fantasy story any more.

Editors, knowing this, try for accent on characterization. Readers, their senses jaded and no longer capable of naive delight, correctly come to the conclusion if that if all they can get is more livable characters and less stimulating ideas, they might as well read historical novels. New readers of ten and eleven years of age are already stuffed to the gills with Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon, and tv stf, containing the cream of the ideas. They find the same ideas, less excitingly expressed, in magazines, and drop out.

And yet, the writers as a group must pound out fifty fresh stf stories per month, six hundred per year, which reach print, and these must please editors who have read five hundred almost identical stories, better written, which have, unfortunately, already been published and anthologized and imitated over and over.

What is the answer? In the old days before the boom, I had the answer. I wrote stories whose wonder and scope I felt deeply while I was writing them—and for that reason the reader picked up that feeling. When the editors introduced their scared policy, I tried to follow their frantic leaps from one extreme to another. So did a lot of other writers. In their day of glory editors like J. W. Campbell Jr., Howard Browne, Bill Hamling, and Ray Palmer each had a nucleus of comfortably fed writers who knew what they were doing and did it to reasonable perfection, knowing that each sheet they filled, double spaced, was another three to nine dollars in their pocket. Now and then a new writer hove into sight in the slushpile, and was quickly given a

place in the scheme of things. He made a living doing what he loved to do. Write.

Suddenly that change. A writer with a couple of stories turned in went down to pick up his checks and instead was handed back the stories. "Why? The reason was simple, although it wasn't obvious then. Something was wrong with the circulation figures, and no one knew what it was, so every editor concluded that the remedy was to change the editorial policy. That meant the writer had to change his technique. More devastating, it meant that he now had to second-guess a confused editor. He couldn't. The editor turned to the slush-pile, the stories by budding amateurs.

Essentially, a writer is a lover wooing his love, the reading public. *It is an individual and intimate relationship.* Who was the editor who bought the Tarzan stories? Who cares? Who was the editor who bought the Fu Manchu stories? Who cares? In all great stories, there is a human being, who, with dignity and skill, says in effect, "This I *feel,* my reader, my

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love, and I lay my heart before you." And the reader enters into that intimate relationship with the writer, living his thoughts, sharing them, becoming a person the writer created, viewing grand vistas of imagination and new perspectives of reality which are fresh and alive — not because they are necessarily new, but because they live.

Into this moonlight scene suddenly came the glaring lights of scared editors, squawking, "Get some sex into it cut out the sex get more life into it cut out the funny stuff entertain polly want a crackerquaaawwkk. Put some FEELING into it, boy. Never mind the grocery bill, put your heart into the next one and forget this one — only leave it sort of open, until I get the new circulation figures next Tuesday so I can know if my new editorial policy is the right one or not."

The soft moonlight was gone while the editors screamed "Turn on the Moon!" The reading public ran away while the editors screamed at the writers, "Now see what you've done! You dope, you are too clumsy a wooer. Now, I'll tell you just what to do . . ."

So the writing stables vanished from the scene, and with them the backbone of every magazine in existence was broken. It still is. Today the writer is a lover who must write out his feelings in outline form, change them to fit the ideas of an editor who doesn't know what he wants. Then he must whisper into the ear of his loved ones, the readers, under a paper Moon, "My editor agreed that it is probably okay to say that I love you very deeply, my love."

That has been what was wrong— with me, at least, in my writing for the past four years. I think it has been the trouble with most of the professionals in the field. It took me a long time to think it out. It took me a long time to get over being bewildered and confused and uncertain. And unable to write.

But maybe I will again, sometime soon . . . when the lights are low, and there is just me and you.

Getting back to Dean Grennell's article, as I said, it is thought provoking. CANADIAN Fandom #24 is a good issue.

That's all for this time. Why don't you send for several of the fanzines I've reviewed more or less, and see how much life there is in that ol' carcas, the stf reading public. I saw it at the Midwestcon. I saw hundreds of readers who are waiting for science fiction to start cooking once more.

Rog Phillips
Apt. 308
6613 Normal
Chicago 21, Ill.

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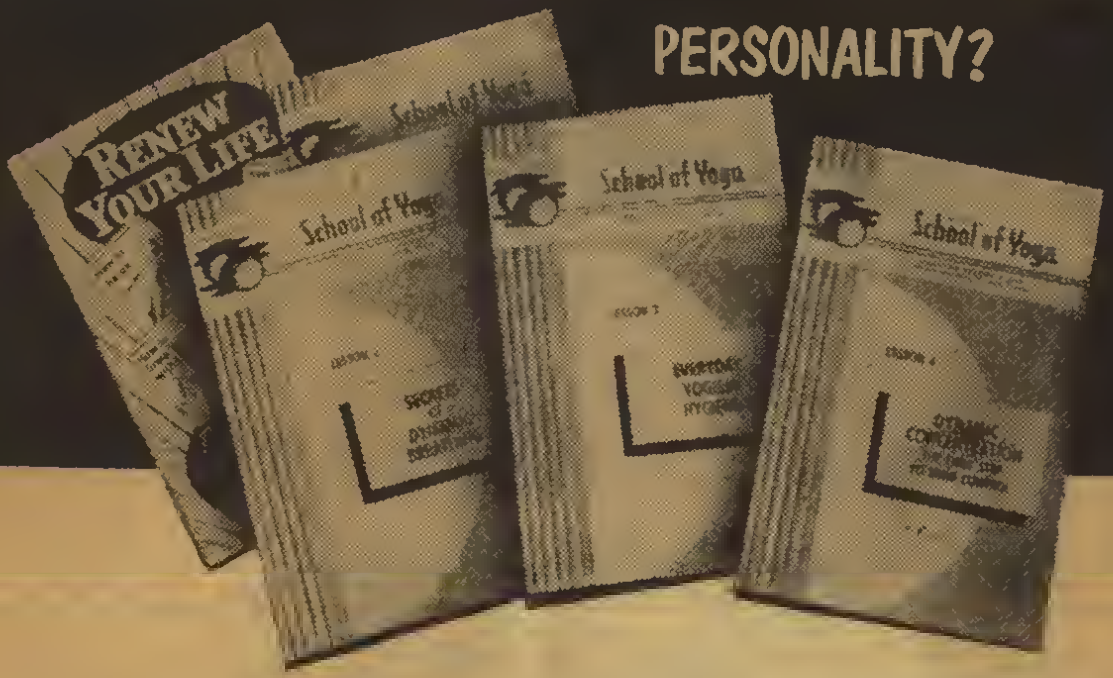
PSYCHIC POWERS? SELF CONFIDENCE? PERSONALITY?



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THE CASE OF THE WAYWARD LADY

(See Back Cover)

SHE was the most beautiful little lady in the Service. No doubt about it. She had a body that was the last word in slim loveliness. Her every line and curve sent thrills of delight up and down the spine of every man who had ever seen her in all her unconcealed beauty. Naked as the day she was born, she stood now in her mental tower, looking up at the moon she so longed to reach, if her lifting head, proudly upthrust from her white body, truly expressed the desire that filled her with an all-consuming fire. The moon! It shone above her, the abode of Eros, the heaven of all lovers through time immemorial! She reached outward toward it, passion a raging flame in her bowels, and rose slowly, yet more swiftly, from her captive tower, released at last for her rendezvous with her womanly destiny . . .

And to the men of the Service, her white form, flashing into the blue of the sky, was a symbol of their own desire. There, on her maiden voyage, went the WAC Corporal, a slim beauty of a rocket, toward not only her own destiny, but the destiny of all men—if she reached her goal!

Did she?

Yes, we are speaking in the past tense! Some years ago, the WAC Corporal did arc her way into the heavens, striving for an altitude record. Within her slim shell were delicate instruments, whose readings, upon recovery of her shattered body from the sands of surrounding desert, would give her launchers valuable information about the outer atmosphere. Information that would eventually lead to an actual attempt to send a rocket to the moon! But that information never came back!

As tense technicians tracked her progress aloft, sixty miles, ninety miles, a hundred and ten, two hundred, two hundred fifty . . . a sudden hush fell over them. A record, this time! But wait. how high was she now? Lost her? But that couldn't be! Three theodolites, four telescopes, two powerful radar installations . . . they couldn't possibly lose her all at once!

But they had! No matter how they swept the heavens, the men of the Service could not find her again. She had vanished as completely as if . . .

As if what?

Until today, no answer has been found to that question. Somewhere out in space, a lovely wayward lady has disappeared. Has the faithless hussy run off with the Man In The Moon?

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